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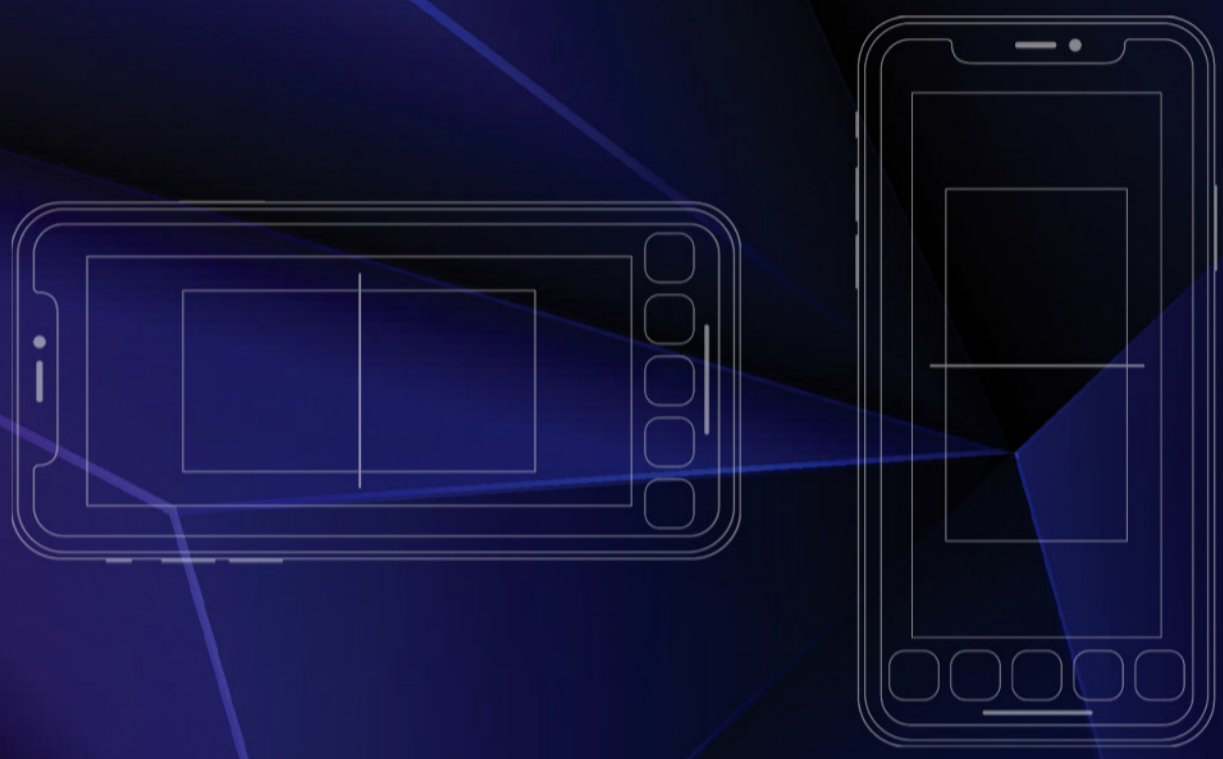

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SPACE

THIRD TEST FLIGHT OF SPACEX'S MEGA ROCKET ENDS WITH LOSS OF SPACECRAFT

Image: Eric Gay

SpaceX's mega rocket blasted off on another test flight Thursday and made it farther than two previous attempts, but the spacecraft was lost as it descended back to Earth.

The company said it lost contact with the spacecraft as it neared its goal, a splashdown in the Indian Ocean, about an hour after liftoff from the southern tip of Texas near the Mexican border.

Two test flights last year both ended in explosions minutes after liftoff.

Starship, the biggest and most powerful rocket ever built, headed out over the Gulf of Mexico after launch Thursday. Minutes later, the booster separated seamlessly from the spaceship and splashed down into the gulf and the spacecraft continued eastward. No people or satellites were on board.

Image: Patrick T. Fallon

SPACEX

Image: Eva Marie Uzcategui

An hour later, SpaceX commentators said contact had been lost with the spacecraft.

"The ship has been lost. So no splashdown today," said SpaceX's Dan Huot. "But again, it's incredible to see how much further we got this time around."

Earlier during the flight, SpaceX's Elon Musk had congratulated his team."SpaceX has come a long way," Musk said via X, former Twitter. The rocket company was founded exactly 22 years ago Thursday.

The rocket and futuristic-looking spacecraft towers 397 feet (121 meters), easily exceeding NASA's past and present moon rockets.

NASA watched with keen interest: The space agency needs Starship to succeed in order to land astronauts on the moon in the next two or so years. This new crop of moonwalkers — the first since last century's Apollo program — will descend to the lunar surface in a Starship, at least the first couple times.

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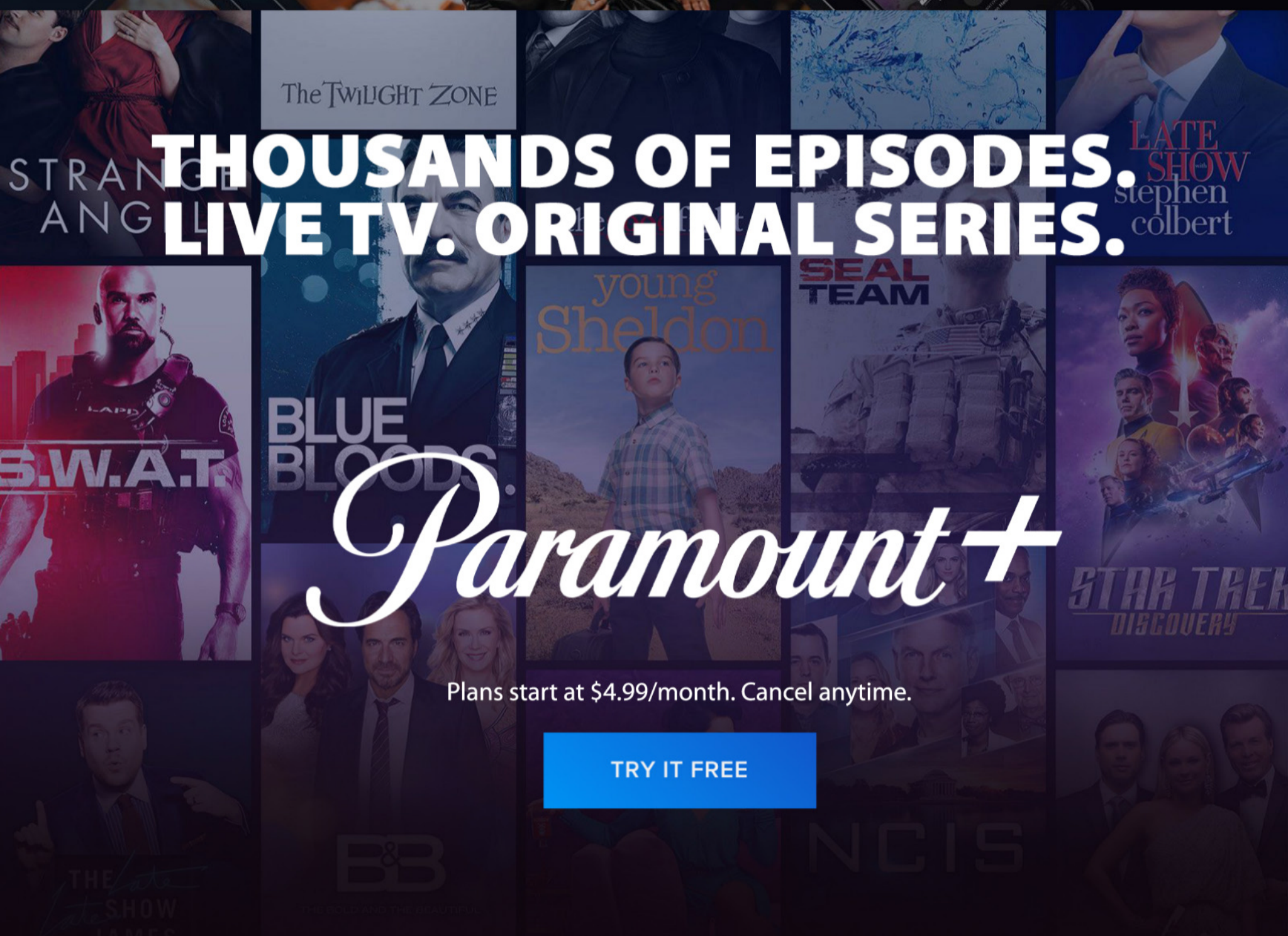

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THE UNITED STATES HAS ITS FIRST LARGE OFFSHORE WIND FARM, WITH MORE TO COME

America's first commercial-scale offshore wind farm is officially open, a long-awaited moment that helps pave the way for a succession of large wind farms.

Danish wind energy developer Ørsted and the utility Eversource built a 12-turbine wind farm called South Fork Wind 35 miles (56 kilometers) east of Montauk Point, New York. New York Gov. Kathy Hochul went to Long Island Thursday to announce that the turbines are delivering clean power to the local electric grid. Interior Secretary Deb Haaland attended.

Hochul said they flipped the switch to turn on the future.

Achieving commercial scale is a turning point for the industry, but what's next? Experts say the nation needs a major buildout of this type of clean electricity to address climate change.

Offshore wind is central to both national and state plans to transition to a carbon-free electricity system. The Biden administration has approved six commercial-scale offshore wind energy projects, and auctioned lease areas for offshore wind for the first time off the Pacific and Gulf of Mexico coasts. New York picked two more projects last month to power more than 1 million homes.

This is just the beginning, Hochul said. She said the completion of South Fork shows that New York will aggressively pursue climate change solutions to save future generations from a world that otherwise could be dangerous. South Fork can generate 132 megawatts of offshore wind energy to power more than 70,000 homes.

"It's great to be first, we want to make sure we're not the last. That's why we're showing other states how it can be done, why we're moving forward, on to other projects," Hochul told.

"This is the date and the time that people will look back in the history of our nation and say, 'This is when it changed,'" Hochul added.

Ørsted CEO Mads Nipper called the opening a major milestone that proves large offshore wind farms can be built, both in the United States and in other countries with little or no offshore wind energy currently.

With South Fork finished, Ørsted and Eversource are turning their attention to the work they will do offshore beginning this spring for a wind farm more than five times its size. Revolution Wind will be Rhode Island and Connecticut's first commercial-scale offshore wind farm, capable of powering more than 350,000 homes next year. The site where the cable will connect in Rhode Island is already under construction.

In New York, the state said last month it would negotiate a contract with Ørsted and Eversource for an even larger wind farm, Sunrise Wind, to power 600,000 homes. The Norwegian company Equinor was picked for its Empire Wind 1 project to power more than 500,000 New York homes. Both aim to start providing power in 2026.

After years of planning and development, 2024 is a year of action— building projects that will deliver sizeable amounts of clean power to the grid, said David Hardy, group executive vice president and CEO Americas at Ørsted.

Ørsted, formerly DONG Energy, for Danish Oil and Natural Gas, started aggressively building wind farms off the coast of Denmark, the U.K. and Germany in 2008. The company sold off the North Sea oil and gas assets on which it had built its identity to focus on clean energy, becoming Ørsted. It's now one of the biggest wind power developers.

The first U.S. offshore wind farm was supposed to be a project off the coast of Massachusetts known as Cape Wind. A Massachusetts developer proposed the project in 2001. It failed after years of local opposition and litigation.

Turbines began spinning off Rhode Island's Block Island as a pilot project in 2016. But with just five of them, it's not a commercial-scale wind farm.

Last year brought challenges for the nascent U.S. offshore wind industry, as Ørsted and other developers canceled projects in the Northeast that they said were no longer financially feasible. High inflation, supply chain disruptions and the rising cost of capital and building materials were making projects more expensive as developers were trying to get the first large U.S. offshore wind farms opened.

Industry leaders expect 2024 to be a better year, as interest rates come down and states ask for more offshore wind to meet their climate goals.

The nation's second large offshore wind farm, Vineyard Wind, is expected to open later this year off the coast of Massachusetts, too. The first five turbines are providing power for about 30,000 homes and businesses in Massachusetts. When all 62 turbines are spinning, they'll generate enough electricity for 400,000 homes and businesses. Avangrid and Copenhagen Infrastructure Partners are the joint owners of that project.

The Biden administration wants enough offshore wind energy to power 10 million homes by 2030. Interior Secretary Haaland said that "America's clean energy transition is not a dream for a distant future— it's happening right here and right now."

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US LAWMAKERS SEE TIKTOK AS CHINA'S TOOL, EVEN AS IT DISTANCES ITSELF FROM BEIJING

If some U.S. lawmakers have their way, the United States and China could end up with something in common: TikTok might not be available in either country.

The House on Wednesday approved a bill requiring the Beijing-based company ByteDance to sell its subsidiary TikTok or face a nationwide ban. It's unclear if the bill will ever become law, but it reflects lawmakers' fears that the social media platform could expose Americans to Beijing's malign influences and data security risks.

Image: J. Scott Applewhite

But while U.S. lawmakers associate TikTok with China, the company, headquartered outside China, has strategically kept its distance from its homeland.

Since its inception, the TikTok platform has been intended for non-Chinese markets and is unavailable in mainland China. It pulled out of Hong Kong in 2020 when Beijing imposed a national security law on the territory to curtail speech. As data security concerns started to rise in the U.S., TikTok sought to reassure lawmakers that data gathered on U.S. users stays in the country and is inaccessible to ByteDance employees in Beijing.

TikTok's parent company is following the same playbook as many other Chinese companies with global ambitions: To win customers and trust in the United States and other Western countries, they are playing down their Chinese roots and connections. Some have insisted they be called "global companies" instead of "Chinese companies."

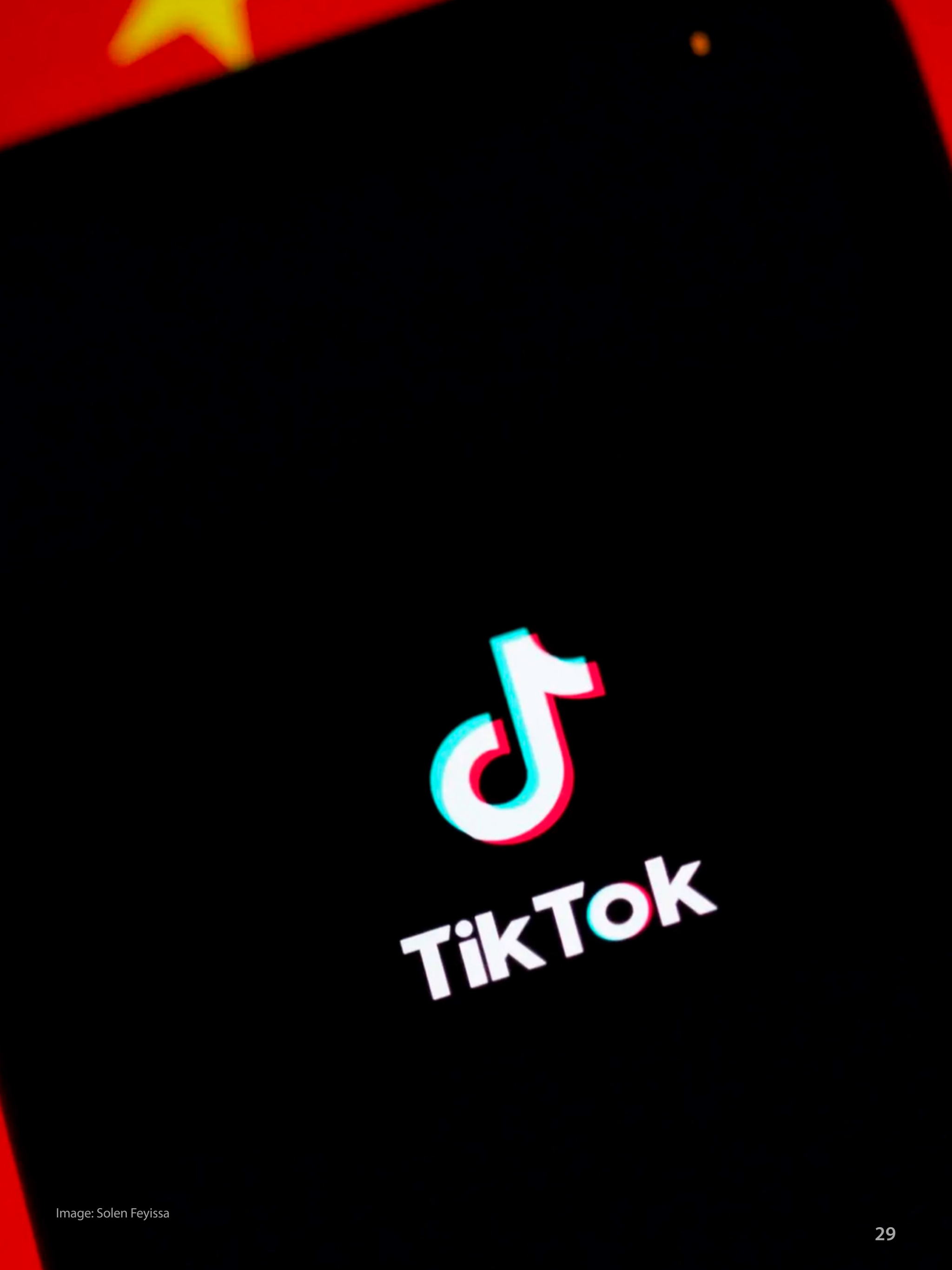


Image: Solen Feyissa

TikT

But for TikTok, this may not be enough. The House bill passed overwhelmingly on a 352-65 vote. Its prospects in the Senate are uncertain, but if it clears both chambers, President Joe Biden said he would sign it into law. The moves in Washington threaten the app's survival and cast a spotlight on the quandary that many private Chinese companies have found themselves a part of as they seek to engage Western markets at a time of souring U.S.-China relations.

"It's the most difficult time for Chinese tech companies and private businesses in decades as tensions and rivalry between the United States and China continue to grow," said Zhiqun Zhu, professor of political science and international relations at Bucknell University.

"These companies and businesses face squeezing from both sides as they struggle to survive," Zhu said. "While the U.S. and other Western countries have imposed sanctions or restrictions on these companies, China itself has moved to favor state-owned enterprises in recent years, leaving little room for Chinese tech and private businesses to operate."

Alex Capri, senior lecturer at the National University of Singapore and research fellow at Hinrich Foundation, agreed that companies like TikTok with Chinese roots are "really stuck in two polar extremes" between the heavy-handed communist party and the deeply suspicious West.

"Any Chinese tech company has to operate under a cloud of suspicion, and that's because there's a total breakdown of trust," Capri said.

With the rise of techno-nationalism, by which technological capabilities are deemed a national strategic asset, China's tech companies are obligated by Beijing's laws and rules to turn over data and have become "essentially a de-facto representative" of China's ruling communist party, Capri said.

"That in itself makes it very challenging for companies like TikTok," he said.

In 2018, Zhang Yiming, the founder of ByteDance, toed the party line after Beijing shut down ByteDance's jokes app. He apologized publicly for his company's deviations from socialistic core values and promised to "comprehensively rectify the algorithm" on its news app and add significantly more layers of censoring — a move considered necessary for any company to survive in China.

That explains the oft-repeated claim by Rep. Mike Gallagher, chair of the House Select Committee on China's communist party, that "there's no such thing as a private company in China."

The bill, as approved by the House, seeks to remove applications from app stores or web hosting services in the U.S. unless the application severs its ties to companies — such as ByteDance — that are subject to the control from foreign adversaries, like China.

"This is my message to TikTok: Break up with the Chinese Communist Party or lose access to your American users," said Gallagher, the bill's sponsor. "America's foremost adversary has no business controlling a dominant media platform in the United States. TikTok's time in the United States is over unless it ends its relationship with CCP-controlled ByteDance."

Image: J. Scott Applewhite

Image: J. Scott Applewhite

Congressional mistrust of TikTok was evident at a Jan. 31 hearing when Sen. Tom Cotton repeatedly asked CEO Shou Zi Chew if he is a Chinese citizen beholden to the Communist party. Chew, who is Singaporean, repeatedly said no.

On Tuesday, Rep. Nancy Pelosi said it's problematic that ByteDance, which owns the social platform's algorithm, is subject to Beijing's control.

Chew, in another congressional hearing last year, told Congress that "we do not remove or promote content on behalf of the Chinese government."

In a recent interview with Wired magazine, Chew acknowledged that the company's Chinese origins have given TikTok a "bigger trust deficit than most other companies."

"Maybe our trust starting line is behind other businesses, but I also think that there are very serious approaches that we've taken to try and earn that trust and to close that gap," Chew said, citing efforts by TikTok to protect U.S. user data, be transparent and "not be manipulated by any government."

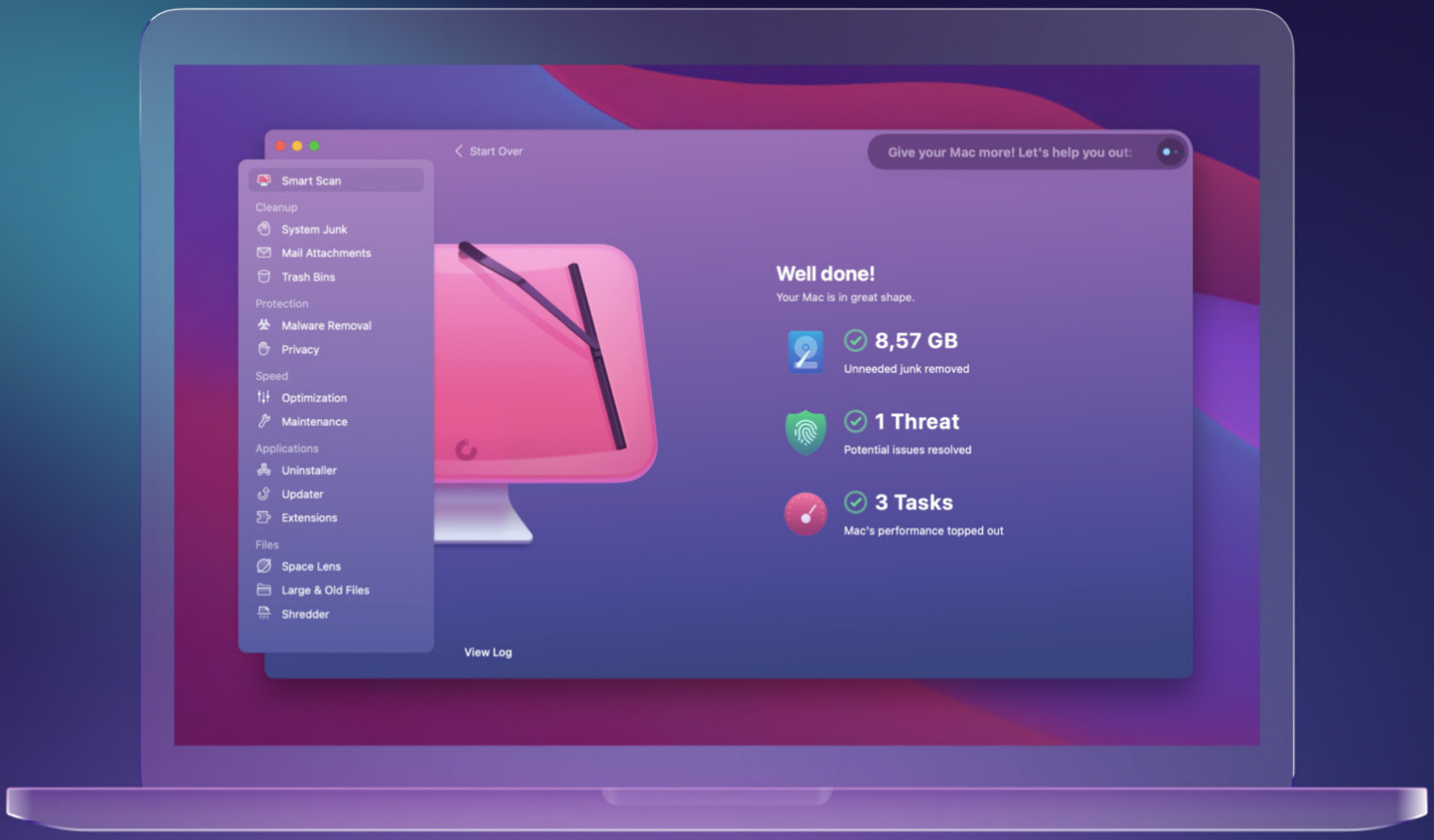
Short of severance from the home country, Chinese companies chasing global ambitions have tried to distance themselves from China by introducing many foreign investors, hiring foreign executives, moving headquarters to outside China and limiting operations to overseas markets, said Thomas Zhang, China analyst at FrontierView, a U.S.-headquartered market intelligence provider. But "the effects are limited as long as the founder in China does not relinquish control," Zhang said.

For TikTok, the trust is so lacking that even a full divestiture from its Chinese parent company may not work, because complicated ownership structures can obscure potential Chinese ownership, Capri said.

As TikTok fights for survival, it has made a move that is very present in American politics: It's engaging in heavy lobbying, and appealing to its 170 million U.S. users to contact their lawmakers to say a TikTok ban would infringe on their free speech rights.

It's won over one powerful critic: Former President Donald Trump, in a reversal, came out against the TikTok legislation. But Trump, for all his sway with congressional Republicans, couldn't prevent House passage.

If the bill becomes law, Capri said, TikTok could pursue the ultimate American recourse: a lawsuit to challenge the ban.



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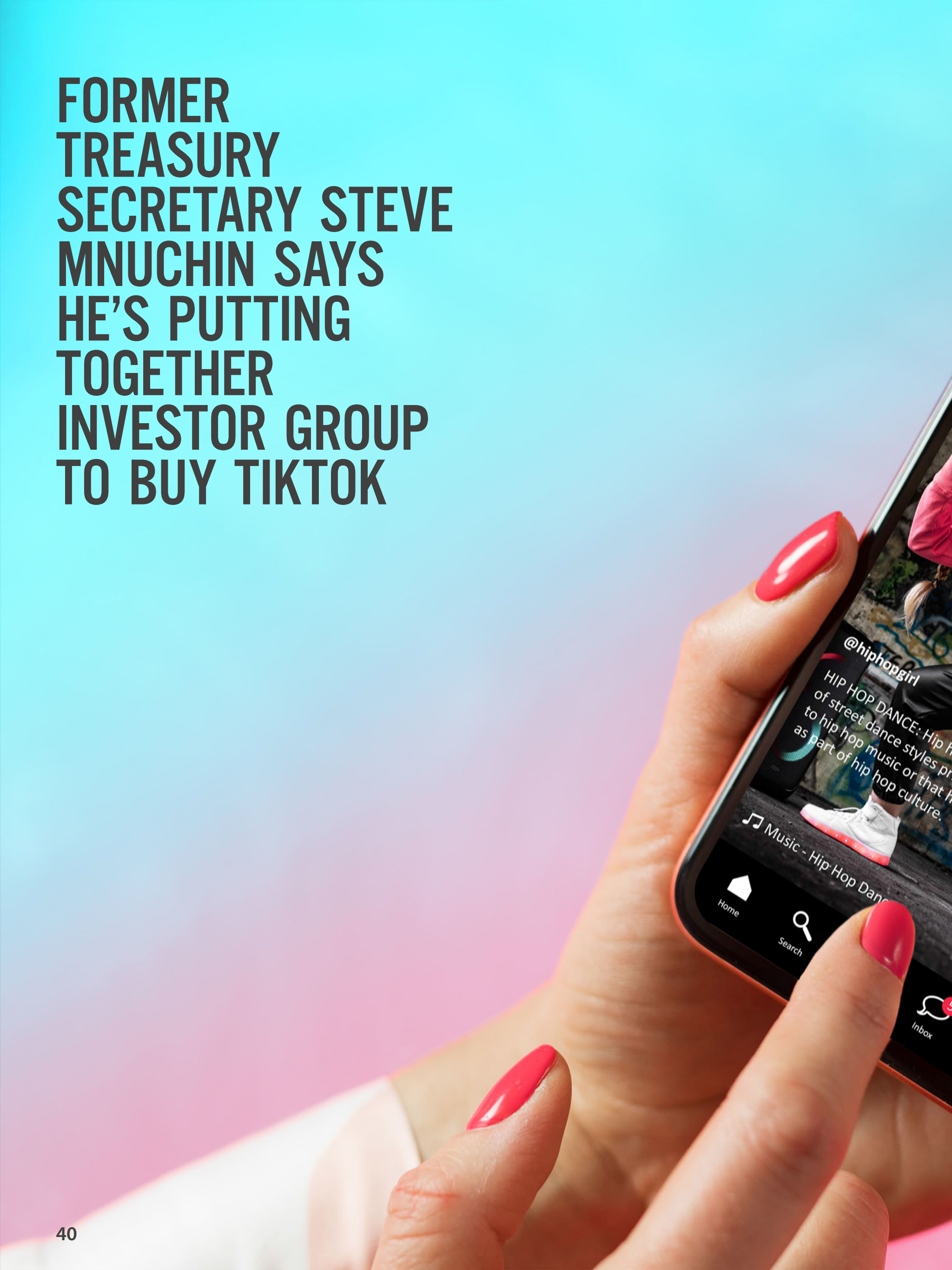
FORMER TREASURY SECRETARY STEVE MNUCHIN SAYS HE'S PUTTING TOGETHER INVESTOR GROUP TO BUY TIKTOK



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Profile

Former U.S. Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin says he's going to put together an investor group to buy TikTok, a day after the House of Representatives passed a bill that would ban the popular video app in the U.S. if its China-based owner doesn't sell its stake.

TikTok, which has more than 170 million American users, is a wholly-owned subsidiary of Chinese technology firm ByteDance Ltd.

Speaking on CNBC's "Squawk Box," Mnuchin said Thursday that he believes TikTok should be sold.

"This should be owned by U.S. businesses. There's no way that the Chinese would ever let a U.S. company own something like this in China," said Mnuchin.

Mnuchin, the U.S. Treasury secretary under President Donald Trump, didn't provide details on who else may be included in the investor group he plans on forming or TikTok's possible valuation.

TikTok did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

The House bill, passed by a vote of 352-65, now goes to the Senate, where its prospects are unclear. House lawmakers had acted on concerns that TikTok's current ownership structure is a national security threat.

Lawmakers in the Senate have indicated that the measure will undergo a thorough review. Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., has said that he'll have to consult with relevant committee chairs to determine the bill's path.

President Joe Biden has said if Congress passes the measure, he will sign it.

TikTok has long denied that it could be used as a tool of the Chinese government. The company has said it has never shared U.S. user data with Chinese authorities and won't do so if it is asked. To date, the U.S. government also has not provided evidence that shows TikTok shared such information with Chinese authorities.

WHO ELSE COULD BUY TIKTOK?

While some others have voiced an interest in buying TikTok's U.S. business — among them "Shark Tank" star Kevin O'Leary — there are a number of challenges including a 6-month deadline to get it done.

"Somebody would have to actually be ready to shell out the large amount of money that this product and system is worth," said Stanford University researcher Graham Webster, who studies Chinese technology policy and U.S.-China relations. "But even if somebody has deep enough pockets and is ready to go into negotiating to purchase, this sort of matchmaking on acquisitions is not quick."

Big tech companies could afford it but would likely face intense scrutiny from antitrust regulators in both the U.S. and China. Then again, if the bill actually becomes law and survives First Amendment court challenges, it could make TikTok cheaper to buy.

"One of the main effects of the legislation would be to decrease the sale price," said Matt Perault, director of the University of North Carolina's Center on Technology Policy, which gets funding from TikTok and other tech companies. "As you approach that 180-day clock, the pressure on the company to sell

TikTok

or risk being banned entirely would be high, which would mean probably the acquirers could get it at a lower price."

HASN'T SOMEONE TRIED TO BUY TIKTOK BEFORE?

Yes. The Trump administration — Mnuchin was Treasury secretary at the time — brokered a deal in 2020 that would have had U.S. corporations Oracle and Walmart take a large stake in TikTok on national security grounds.

The deal would have also made Oracle responsible for hosting all TikTok's U.S. user data and securing computer systems to ensure national security requirements are satisfied. Microsoft also made a failed bid for TikTok that its CEO Satya Nadella later described as the "strangest thing I've ever worked on."

Instead of congressional action, the 2020 arrangement was in response to then-President Trump's series of executive actions targeting TikTok.

But the sale never went through for a number of reasons. Trump's executive orders got held up in court as the 2020 presidential election loomed. China also had imposed stricter export controls on its technology providers.

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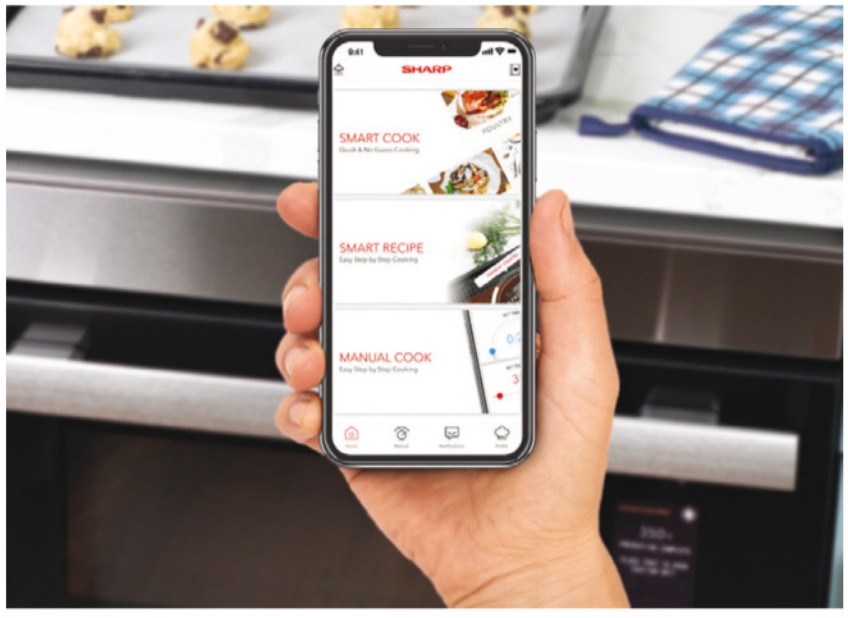

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NEW AI TOOLS CAN RECORD YOUR MEDICAL APPOINTMENT OR DRAFT A MESSAGE FROM YOUR DOCTOR

Don’t be surprised if your doctors start writing you overly friendly messages. They could be getting some help from artificial intelligence.

New AI tools are helping doctors communicate with their patients, some by answering messages and others by taking notes during exams. It’s been 15 months since OpenAI released ChatGPT. Already thousands of doctors are using similar products based on large language models. One company says its tool works in 14 languages.

AI saves doctors time and prevents burnout, enthusiasts say. It also shakes up the doctor-

patient relationship, raising questions of trust, transparency, privacy and the future of human connection.

A look at how new AI tools affect patients:

IS MY DOCTOR USING AI?

In recent years, medical devices with machine learning have been doing things like reading mammograms, diagnosing eye disease and detecting heart problems. What's new is generative AI's ability to respond to complex instructions by predicting language.

Your next check-up could be recorded by an AI-powered smartphone app that listens, documents and instantly organizes everything into a note you can read later. The tool also can mean more money for the doctor's employer because it won't forget details that legitimately could be billed to insurance.

Your doctor should ask for your consent before using the tool. You might also see some new wording in the forms you sign at the doctor's office.

Other AI tools could be helping your doctor draft a message, but you might never know it.

"Your physician might tell you that they're using it, or they might not tell you," said Cait DesRoches, director of OpenNotes, a Boston-based group working for transparent communication between doctors and patients. Some health systems encourage disclosure, and some don't.

Doctors or nurses must approve the AI-generated messages before sending them. In one Colorado health system, such messages contain a sentence disclosing they were

automatically generated. But doctors can delete that line.

"It sounded exactly like him. It was remarkable," said patient Tom Detner, 70, of Denver, who recently received an AI-generated message that began: "Hello, Tom, I'm glad to hear that your neck pain is improving. It's important to listen to your body." The message ended with "Take care" and a disclosure that it had been automatically generated and edited by his doctor.

Detner said he was glad for the transparency. "Full disclosure is very important," he said.

WILL AI MAKE MISTAKES?

Large language models can misinterpret input or even fabricate inaccurate responses, an effect called hallucination. The new tools have internal guardrails to try to prevent inaccuracies from reaching patients — or landing in electronic health records.

"You don't want those fake things entering the clinical notes," said Dr. Alistair Erskine, who leads digital innovations for Georgia-based Emory Healthcare, where hundreds of doctors are using a product from Abridge to document patient visits.

The tool runs the doctor-patient conversation across several large language models and eliminates weird ideas, Erskine said. "It's a way of engineering out hallucinations."

Ultimately, "the doctor is the most important guardrail," said Abridge CEO Dr. Shiv Rao. As doctors review AI-generated notes, they can click on any word and listen to the specific segment of the patient's visit to check accuracy.

In Buffalo, New York, a different AI tool misheard Dr. Lauren Bruckner when she told a teenage cancer patient it was a good thing she didn't have an allergy to sulfa drugs. The AI-generated note said, "Allergies: Sulfa."

The tool "totally misunderstood the conversation," Bruckner said. "That doesn't happen often, but clearly that's a problem."

WHAT ABOUT THE HUMAN TOUCH?

AI tools can be prompted to be friendly, empathetic and informative.

But they can get carried away. In Colorado, a patient with a runny nose was alarmed to learn from an AI-generated message that the problem could be a brain fluid leak. (It wasn't.) A nurse hadn't proofread carefully and mistakenly sent the message.

"At times, it's an astounding help and at times it's of no help at all," said Dr. C.T. Lin, who leads technology innovations at Colorado-based UC Health, where about 250 doctors and staff use a Microsoft AI tool to write the first draft of messages to patients. The messages are delivered through Epic's patient portal.

The tool had to be taught about a new RSV vaccine because it was drafting messages saying there was no such thing. But with routine advice — like rest, ice, compression and elevation for an ankle sprain — "it's beautiful for that," Linn said.

Also on the plus side, doctors using AI are no longer tied to their computers during medical appointments. They can make eye contact with their patients because the AI tool records the exam.

The tool needs audible words, so doctors are learning to explain things aloud, said Dr. Robert Bart, chief medical information officer at Pittsburgh-based UPMC. A doctor might say: "I am currently examining the right elbow. It is quite swollen. It feels like there's fluid in the right elbow."

Talking through the exam for the benefit of the AI tool can also help patients understand what's going on, Bart said. "I've been in an examination where you hear the hemming and hawing while the physician is doing it. And I'm always wondering, 'Well, what does that mean?'"

WHAT ABOUT PRIVACY?

U.S. law requires health care systems to get assurances from business associates that they will safeguard protected health information, and the companies could face investigation and fines from the Department of Health and Human Services if they mess up.

Doctors interviewed for this article said they feel confident in the data security of the new products and that the information will not be sold.

Information shared with the new tools is used to improve them, so that could add to the risk of a health care data breach.

Dr. Lance Owens is chief medical information officer at the University of Michigan Health-West, where 265 doctors, physician assistants and nurse practitioners are using a Microsoft tool to document patient exams. He believes patient data is being protected.

"When they tell us that our data is safe and secure and segregated, we believe that," Owens said.

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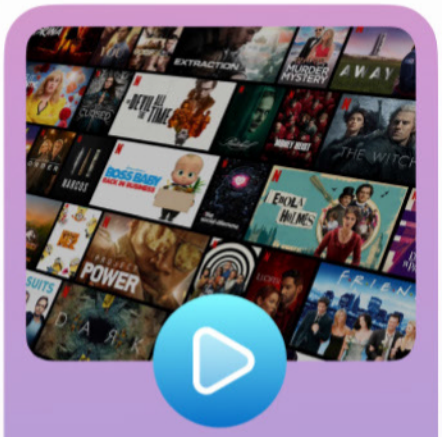

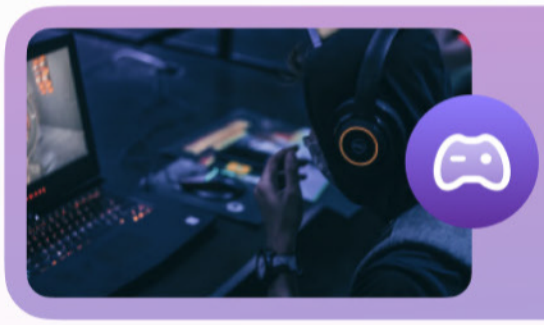

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APPLE REVERSES COURSE AND CLEARS WAY FOR EPIC GAMES TO SET UP RIVAL IPHONE APP STORE IN EUROPE

Apple has reversed course under regulatory pressure and cleared the way for a nettlesome adversary, video game maker Epic Games, to set up an alternative store for iPhone apps in Europe.

The about-face disclosed is the latest twist in a bitter fight between Apple and Epic Games, the maker of the popular Fortnite video game, over the way iPhone apps are distributed and the fees for digital transactions that occur within them.

Apple attributed the change of heart to reassurances from Epic that it won't violate

Search

Fortnite

Epic Games

4.2 ★★★★☆

87,8K Ratings

No5

Adventure

12+

Age

Version Histor

5d a

What's New

Version 11.20

PRESETS - You can now choose

its requirements for getting access to iPhone owners. Epic had brazenly broke the rules in the U.S. in 2020 to trigger an antitrust lawsuit alleging Apple's App Store is a monopoly.

After a month-long trial, a federal judge in 2021 rejected most of Epic's claims in a ruling that withstood appeals, but the bickering with Apple has continued.

Apple had rejected Epic's attempt to set up an account that would have allowed it to set up an alternative store for downloading iPhone apps — something that Apple has held exclusive control over for more than 15 years.

But a new set of regulations called the Digital Marketing Act, or DMA, that took effect in European Union's 27-nation bloc earlier this week cleared the way for other companies to compete against Apple's App Store — an opportunity that Epic was eager to seize upon.

EPIC
GAMES

Epic Games
EPIC
GAMES

Image: Fabian Sommer

Image: Rachel Luna

Epic CEO Tim Sweeney had alleged Apple's actions to stymie its efforts to open an app store in Europe were part of its efforts to retaliate against the video game maker for challenging a system that has been a huge money maker for the iPhone maker. Apple collects commissions ranging from 15% to 30% for digital transactions completed within iPhone apps, an arrangement that generates billions of dollars in annual revenue for the company while spurring complaints from Epic and other companies who rail against the fees as monopolistic price gouging.

European regulators signaled Apple's rejection of Epic's effort to set up an iPhones app developer account in Europe, based in Sweden, might run afoul of the DMA, raising the specter of potentially a substantial fine.

RUN WILD

EPIC
GAMES

Apple didn't mention the regulatory approval in a brief statement saying it is now satisfied Epic will follow all its rules.

Sweeney applauded regulators for taking swift action to rein in Apple in a social media post that hailed the outcome as "a big win for European rule of law, for the European Commission, and for the freedom of developers worldwide to speak up."

The bad blood between Apple and Epic is far from over. Apple is demanding more than $73 million from Epic to cover its fees in the U.S. antitrust case over the App Store. A hearing on that demand, which Epic has described as outlandish in court papers, is scheduled later this month.

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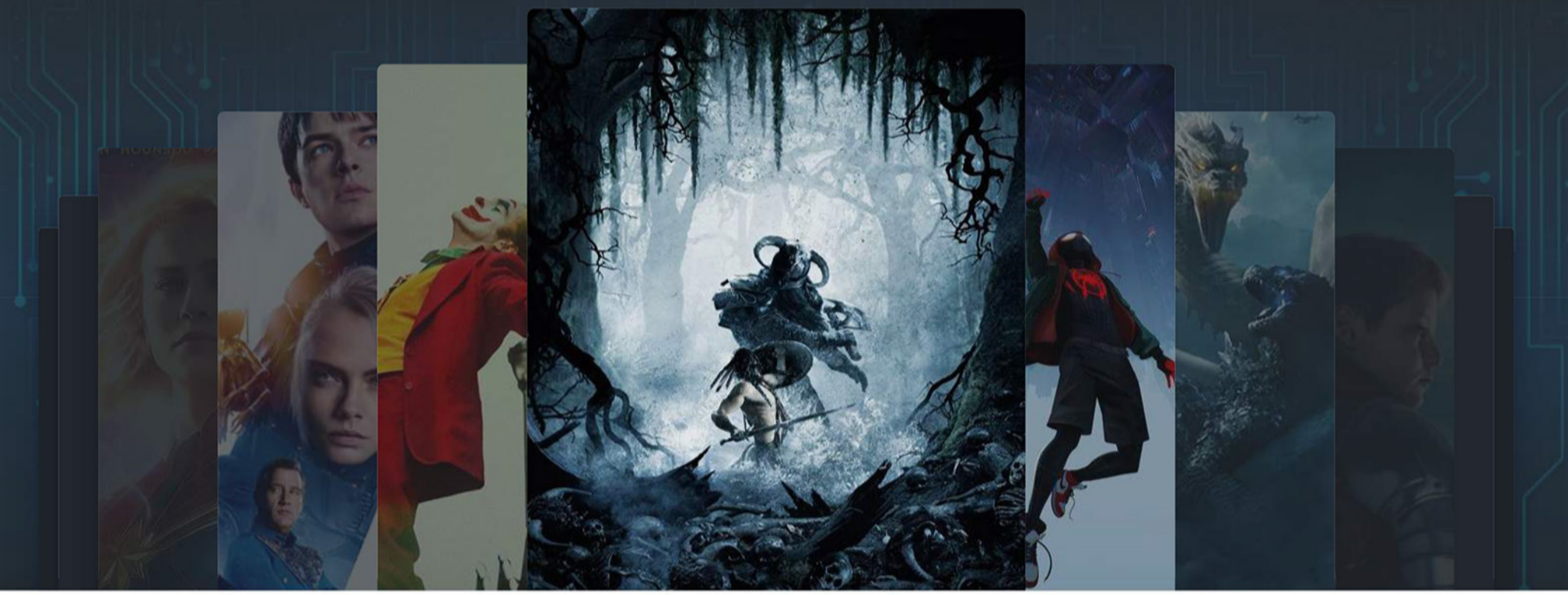

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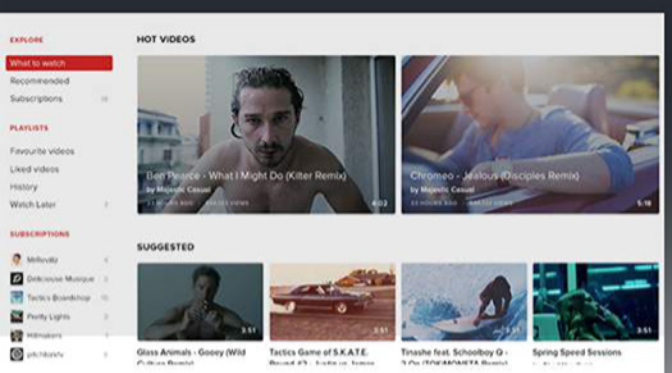

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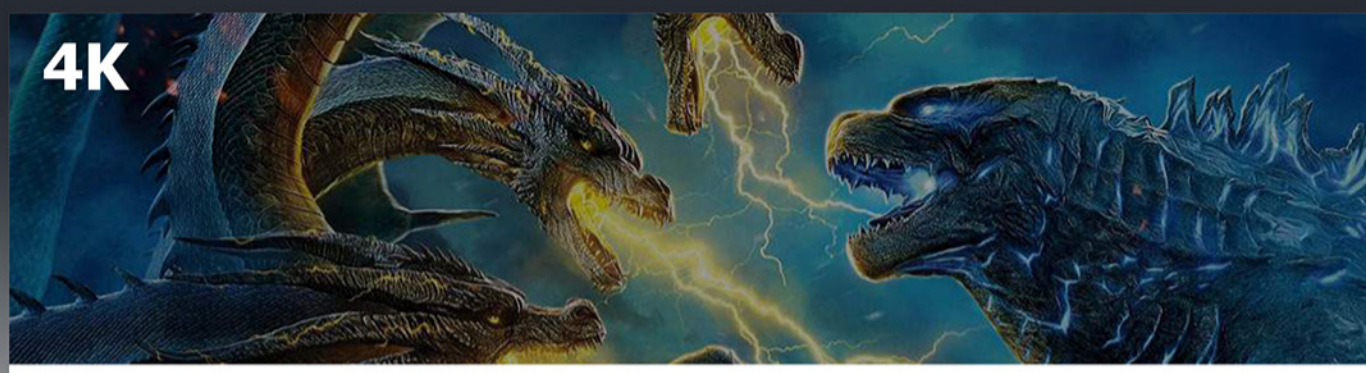

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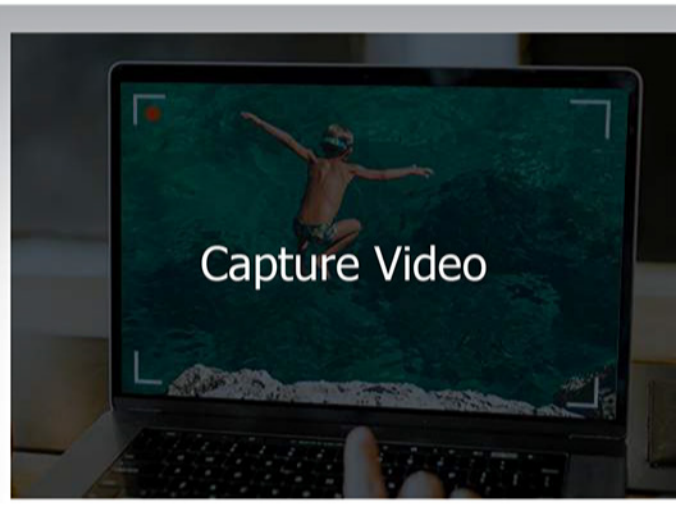

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M3
MAX

Air vs Pro

COMPARING PROS & CONS OF THE POWERFUL M3 MACBOOK LINES

Apple has once again set the stage for a riveting comparison between its latest offerings: the M3 MacBook Air and the M3 MacBook Pro. Both laptops offer unrivaled performance but appeal to different audiences and serve unique purposes for creativity, productivity, and fun.

Sales
Monthly Overview Team Performance and Pipe Impact
Top 10 Most Active Accounts
Top Reps with the Most Activities
Are we engaging the right executives?
Top 20 Customers with no Activity
Top Deals at Risk
Top Competitors on Active Deals

Aster Novae
Week One Schedule
Day 1
IT Setup
Login & Access Session
Security Best Practices
Workflow Overview
Day 2
Orientation
Office Tour
Culture & Values Presentation
Benefits Info Meeting
Day 3
Meet Your Team
Individual Meetings
Staff Lunch
Team-Building Activity
Day 4
Aster Novae Landscape Architects
New Employee Manual
Francois Thibault
Hey! I found those photos of the team you wanted for the onboarding deck. Here's a wide shot and a close-up:
Perfect! Thanks so much, Francois.
Anything else I can help with?
Possibly . . . I'm going to make some tutorials for the key apps we use, like Salesforce. I'll take screen captures today and I think it would be nice to have a real graphic designer help annotate them.
I can definitely help with that. Put some time on my calendar and we can walk through it together.
Will do! Thanks so much, Francois.

SUPERCHARGED WITH M3

Apple's M3 chip represents a significant leap in processing power, promising enhanced performance and efficiency. According to one report, **the M3 chip offers speeds that are up to 60 percent faster than its M1-equipped predecessor** and an incredible 13 times faster than the fastest Intel-based MacBook Air model. The inclusion of this chip in both the MacBook Air and MacBook Pro has sparked curiosity and excitement, setting the scene for a head-to-head comparison that delves into every aspect of these innovative machines. The best part? With the MacBook Air, the M3 is an accessible chip for users and professionals, offering an alternative to Windows and HP laptops.

The M3 MacBook Air, known for its affordability and versatility, is available in two sizes, catering to a broad spectrum of users. The 13-inch model, priced at $1,099, offers an 8-core CPU and GPU coupled with 8GB of RAM and 256GB of SSD storage. For those requiring more screen real estate, the 15-inch variant starts at $1,299, maintaining the same core specifications. There has **been some criticism of Apple over the base model specs** with many suggesting that the company should offer more RAM on the entry-level machines, but for the majority of users who have a Mac to browse the web and do some light video editing, the base specifications should be more than enough. In contrast, the M3 MacBook Pro, available in a 14-inch model, starts at $1,599. This model enhances the graphical capabilities with a 10-core GPU and doubles the storage to 512GB. Like the Air, it starts with 8GB of RAM, but given its professional-oriented design, users might

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Color
Gallery
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140%
Timel
Versions and Original
Primaries - Color Wheels
Temp 0.0
Tint 0.00
Cont 1.000
Pivot 0.435
MD 0.00
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Hi/Light 100.00
Sat 72.20
Hue 49.60
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Circ Win
Polygon Win
PowerCurve
Gradient Win
Color Corrector
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$ 4
% 5
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& 7
* 8
(9
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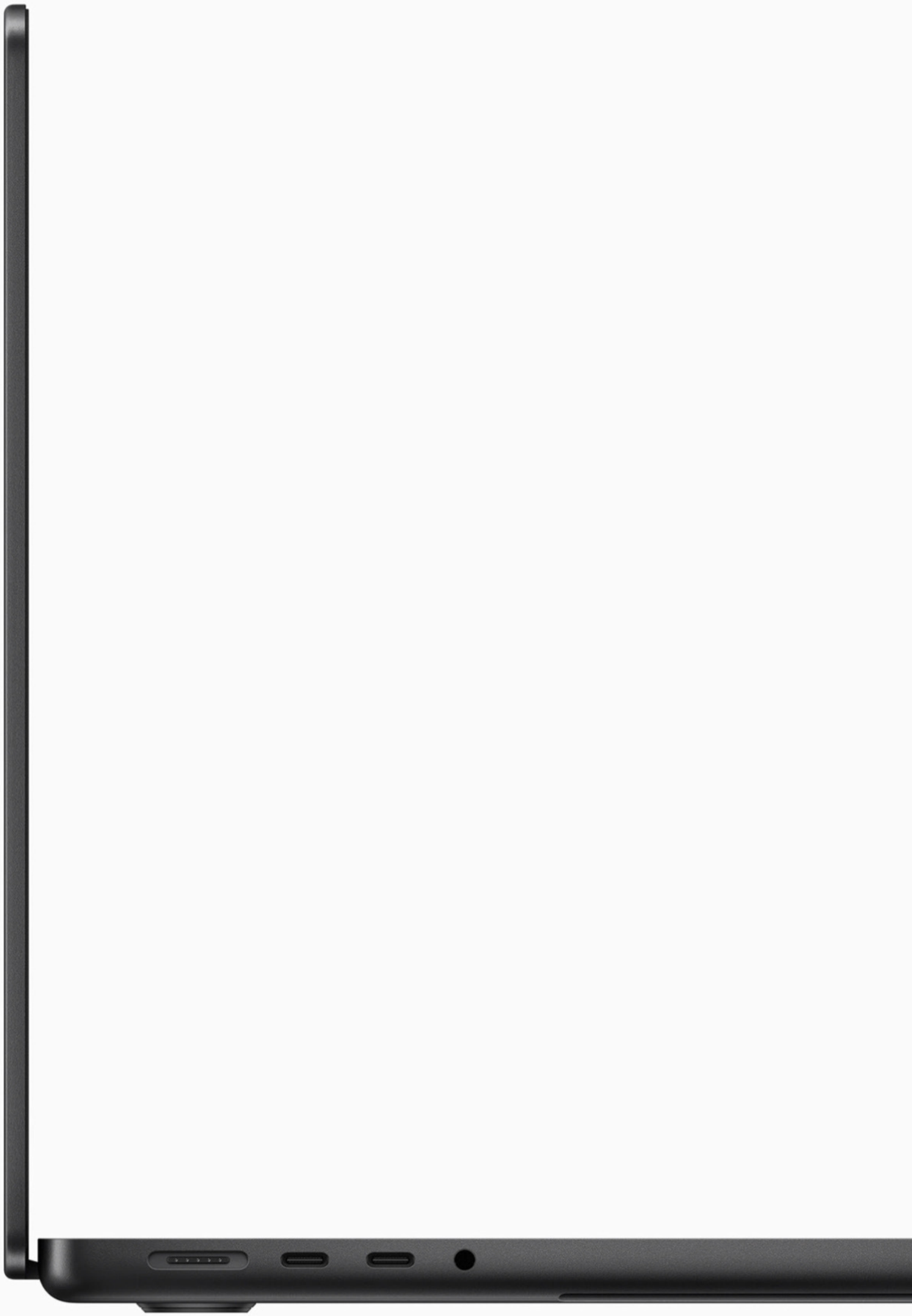
The display is critical for users who rely on their MacBooks for visual tasks. The MacBook Air offers a 2560 x 1664 resolution on its 13-inch model and a 2800 x 1864 resolution on the 15-inch model. Both sizes boast 500 nits of brightness, providing clarity and vivid colors. The MacBook Pro, however, takes the lead in this category with its 3024 x 1964 resolution and an impressive peak brightness of up to 1600 nits. Such specifications make the Pro ideal for professionals in video editing, graphic design, and other visually intensive fields.

STUNNING APPLE DESIGN

Apple's design philosophy is evident in the Air and Pro models, though each caters to different user preferences. The MacBook Air's slim profile and various colors, including the **unique Midnight Black**, blend style and functionality. Its lightweight design is particularly appealing to users who value portability. The MacBook Pro, with its slightly heavier and thicker chassis, is designed with performance in mind. Its limited color options reflect a more professional aesthetic, and the inclusion of speaker grilles hints at its superior audio capabilities. Still, the truth is that both devices look almost identical and follow Apple's impressive, unbeatable design language.

A DEEP DIVE ON TECH

Apple has not compromised on audio quality, with both models offering impressive sound systems. The MacBook Air's four-speaker setup



delivers clear and robust audio suitable for casual listening and multimedia consumption. However, with its six-speaker system, the MacBook Pro provides an unrivaled audio experience, offering depth and clarity that will satisfy even the most discerning audiophiles. In today's digital age, the range of ports and connectivity options can significantly impact a user's workflow. The MacBook Air offers two Thunderbolt/USB 4 ports, a headphone jack, and MagSafe 3, catering to basic connectivity needs. However, the MacBook Pro extends its utility with additional HDMI and SDXC card slots, making it a more versatile option for professionals who require a broader array of connection options. For the first time, both models now support two external displays, a feature that enhances productivity and multitasking capabilities. This dual-display support, while **limiting the use of the laptop's panel** signifies Apple's commitment to providing flexible and adaptable computing solutions and makes the Air model even more suited to everyday office use.

While the Air and Pro models house the M3 chip, their performance profiles cater to different user needs. With its fanless design, the MacBook Air offers a silent yet powerful computing experience, suitable for everyday tasks and light creative work. The MacBook Pro, with its additional GPU cores and active cooling system, is engineered to handle more demanding tasks, providing sustained performance under heavy workloads. Geekbench scores reflect the **close competition in CPU performance between the two models.** However, the Pro's superior

119
355

GPU configuration becomes a deciding factor for users engaged in graphics-intensive tasks, offering a noticeable edge in performance, necessary for more resource-intensive tasks.

Battery life is crucial for many users, influencing a laptop's overall portability and convenience. **The MacBook Air models boast up to 18 hours of battery life** offering ample power for a full day's work or entertainment. The **MacBook Pro, however, extends this, offering 22 hours of battery life,** making it an ideal choice for those who require long-lasting performance.

CHOOSING THE RIGHT MODEL

There's no right or wrong answer when deciding between the M3 MacBook Air and Pro. The MacBook Air presents a compelling package of portability, style, and sufficient power for general use. It is an excellent choice for students, casual users, and professionals with moderate computing needs. The MacBook Pro, tailored for more demanding tasks, stands out with its superior display, audio system, and performance capabilities. It caters to professionals in creative industries, developers, and anyone requiring a robust machine to handle intensive workloads.

Whichever model you choose, there's no denying that Apple's portable Mac range has never been better. We can't wait to see what updates come to its desktop companions this year!

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It's been a common refrain when seeking proof that someone's story or some event actually took place: "Pics, or it didn't happen."

But in a world where the spread of technology makes photo manipulation as easy as a tap on your phone, the idea that a visual image is an absolute truth is as outdated as the daguerreotype. And a photo can sometimes raise as many questions as it was meant to answer.

That was seen in recent days when controversy descended upon an image of Kate, Princess of Wales, and her three children. News agencies including The Associated Press published, then retracted, the image given out by Buckingham Palace over concerns it had been manipulated, leading to Kate saying on social media that she occasionally "experimented" with photo editing.

In that, she's hardly alone.

From something that was time-consuming and required a great deal of technical expertise in the days of actual film and darkrooms, digital editing has become something practically anyone can do, from adding filters to cropping images and much more. Apps abound, offering the easiest of experiences in creating and retouching photos and videos which can then be easily transmitted online and through social media.

"Cover blemishes and let the real you shine through," says an ad for the smartphone app Facetune. "Remove and change backgrounds instantly," the Fotor app's website enthuses. "Our AI object remover is ready to assist you in getting rid of unwanted objects."

This Wild West of image-altering abilities is opening new frontiers for everyday people — and creating headaches for those who expect photos to be a documentary representation of reality.

THE MAINSTREAMING OF MANIPULATION

Photojournalists and major news organizations follow standards and ethics codes around photos. These organizations typically place an absolute premium on image authenticity and reject photographs that have been altered in any way. But efforts to identify altered imagery can be impeded by the increasingly easy-to-use apps for phones and computers that allow anyone to chip away, piece by piece, at what a camera actually recorded.

The mainstreaming of manipulation, placing such abilities at people's fingertips, has made for some interesting and viral moments — like the one in March 2023 when an artificially generated image of Pope Francis wearing a puffy white coat took in many people who thought it was real.

But there are risks and dangers to a world where just because you see something doesn't mean you can absolutely believe it, said Ken Light, a photojournalism professor at the University of California Berkeley's Graduate School of Journalism.

"The role of photography has been to witness and to record for the moment, but also for history. And I don't think any of us know where it's going," he said. The rise of visual manipulation that casts doubt on whether

something is real or not "frays the fabric of the culture tremendously in the moment but also for the future."

Fred Ritchin, dean emeritus of the school at the International Center of Photography and a former picture editor at The New York Times Magazine, agreed. "'The camera never lies' is a 20th-century idea. It's not a 21st-century idea," he said. "These are all mythologies that we're still hiding behind and we have not really confronted."

People have long known that some images are manipulated, like cover models on magazines, and some have raised concerns about that impact that artificial and manipulated standards of beauty can have on girls and women.

But they haven't really come to terms with how widespread digital manipulation is in other areas like social media, done by a wide variety of everyday people, said Lexie Kite, who with her sister Lindsay has done research into body image and media and wrote "More Than A Body: Your Body Is an Instrument, Not an Ornament."

"It is important for all of us to anchor ourselves in the truth that digital manipulation is our reality," she said.

HOW CAN FAKERY BE IDENTIFIED?

People can take steps to deal with the creeping effects of photo manipulation, said Hany Farid, a professor at UC Berkeley whose research examines digital forensics and image analysis.

Viewers need "to just slow down a little bit, be a little bit more careful, be a little more thoughtful" about what they're looking at instead of just

assuming any image they see is fact, he said.

On the technology side, he said there are ways being developed to track visual images and to make it clear if they've been altered after the photos were taken.

But while such steps may mitigate some of the issues, he said, it won't eliminate the problem or take us back to where we could have abiding faith in an image, as previous generations did with photos we now consider unforgettable.

"Almost every major incident in our history, wars, conflicts, disasters, there's this iconic photo," he said. "They're so powerful because they capture this incredibly complex set of facts and emotions and history in one photo. And I don't know that we can have that anymore. It's a very different world going forward now."

Or, if the adage was modified: "Pics, and maybe it still didn't quite happen."

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OPENAI HAS ‘FULL CONFIDENCE’ IN CEO SAM ALTMAN AFTER INVESTIGATION, REINSTATES HIM TO BOARD

OpenAI is reinstating CEO Sam Altman to its board of directors and said it has “full confidence” in his leadership after the conclusion of an outside investigation into the company’s turmoil.

The ChatGPT maker tapped the law firm WilmerHale to look into what led the company to abruptly fire Altman in November, only to rehire him days later. After months of investigation, it found that Altman’s ouster was a “consequence of a breakdown in the relationship and loss of trust” between him and the prior board, OpenAI said in a summary of the findings. It did not release the full report.

Image: Justin Sullivan

OpenAI also announced it has added three women to its board of directors: Dr. Sue Desmond-Hellman, a former CEO of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation; Nicole Seligman, a former Sony general counsel; and Instacart CEO Fidji Simo.

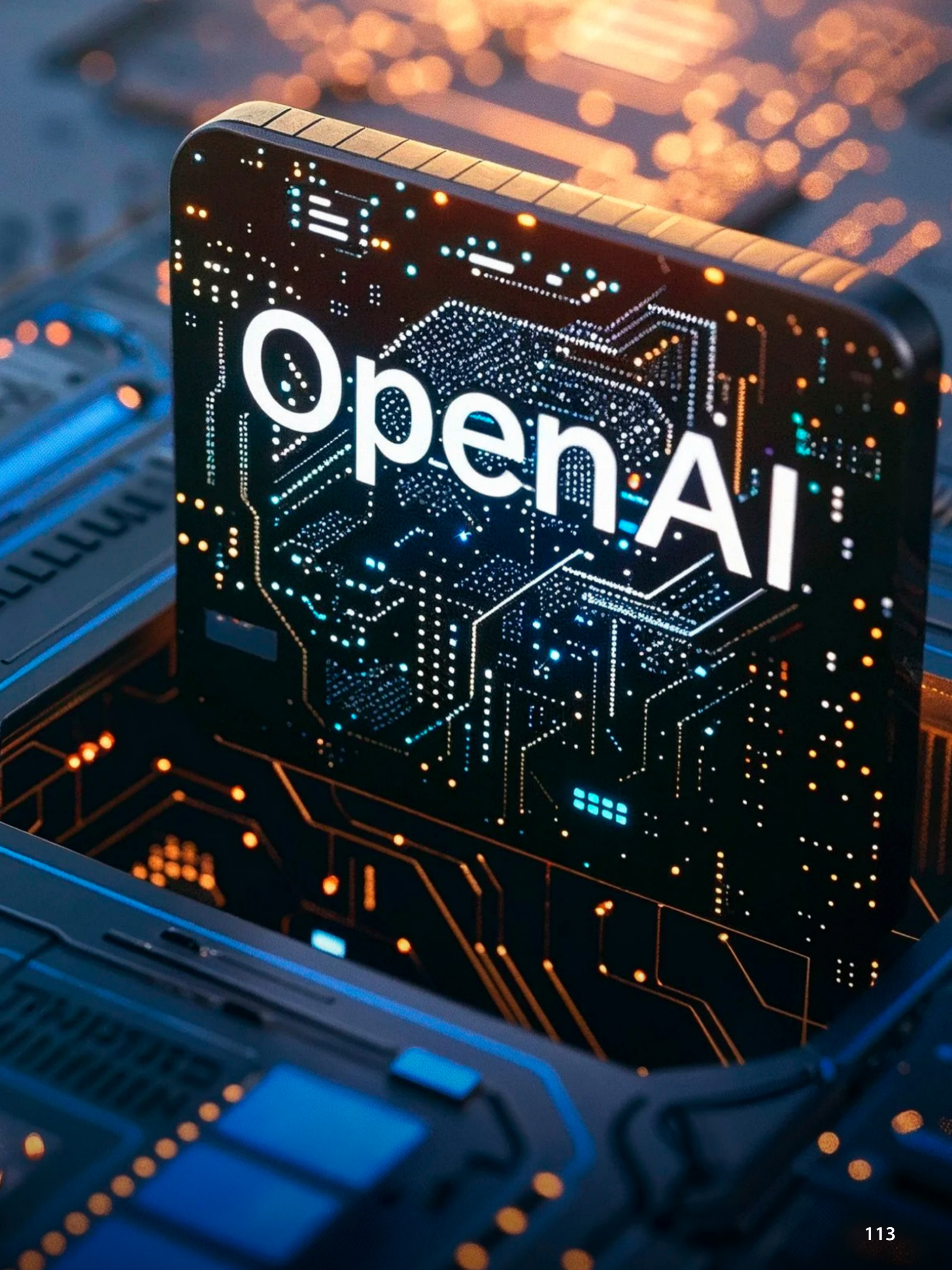
The actions are a way for the San Francisco-based artificial intelligence company to show investors and customers that it is trying to move past the internal conflicts that nearly destroyed it last year and made global headlines.

"I'm pleased this whole thing is over," Altman told reporters, adding that he's been disheartened to see "people with an agenda" leaking information to try to harm the company or its mission and "pit us against each other." At the same time, he said he's learned from the experience and apologized for a dispute with a former board member he could have handled "with more grace and care."

In a parting shot, two board members who voted to fire Altman before getting pushed out themselves wished the new board well but said accountability is paramount when building technology "as potentially world-changing" as what OpenAI is pursuing.

"We hope the new board does its job in governing OpenAI and holding it accountable to the mission," said a joint statement from ex-board members Helen Toner and Tasha McCauley. "As we told the investigators, deception, manipulation, and resistance to thorough oversight should be unacceptable."

For more than three months, OpenAI said little about what led its then-board of directors to fire Altman on Nov. 17. An announcement that


OpenAI

day said Altman was "not consistently candid in his communications" in a way that hindered the board's ability to exercise its responsibilities. He also was kicked off the board, along with its chairman, Greg Brockman, who responded by quitting his job as the company's president.

Much of OpenAI's conflicts have been rooted in its unusual governance structure. Founded as a nonprofit with a mission to safely build futuristic AI that helps humanity, it is now a fast-growing big business still controlled by a nonprofit board bound to its original mission.

The investigation found the prior board acted within its discretion. But it also determined that Altman's "conduct did not mandate removal," OpenAI said. It said both Altman and Brockman remained the right leaders for the company.

"The review concluded there was a significant breakdown in trust between the prior board, and Sam and Greg," Bret Taylor, the board's chair, told reporters. "And similarly concluded that the board acted in good faith, that the board believed at the time that its actions would mitigate some of the challenges that it perceived and didn't anticipate some of the instability."

The dangers posed by increasingly powerful AI systems have long been a subject of debate among OpenAI's founders and leaders. But citing the law firm's findings, Taylor said Altman's firing "did not arise out of concerns regarding product safety or security."

Nor was it about OpenAI's finances or any statements made to investors, customers or business partners, Taylor said.

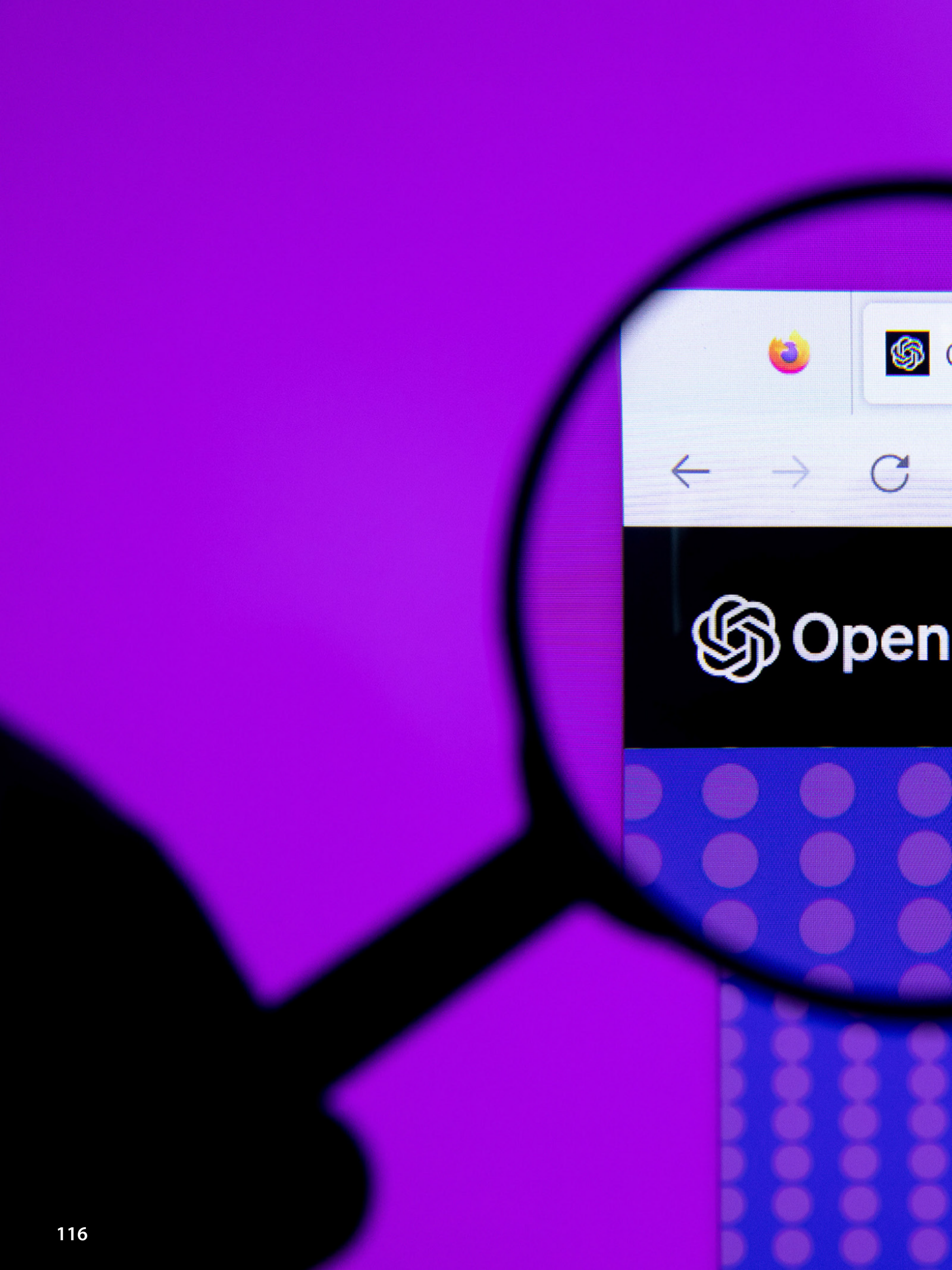


Image: Stephanie Lecocq

Days after his surprise ouster, Altman and his supporters — with backing from most of OpenAI's workforce and close business partner Microsoft — helped orchestrate a comeback that brought Altman and Brockman back to their executive roles and forced out board members Toner, a Georgetown University researcher; McCauley, a scientist at the RAND Corporation; and another co-founder, Ilya Sutskever. Sutskever kept his job as chief scientist and publicly expressed regret for his role in ousting Altman.

"I think Ilya loves OpenAI," Altman said, saying he hopes they will keep working together but declining to answer a question about Sutskever's current position at the company.

Altman and Brockman did not regain their board seats when they rejoined the company in November. But an "initial" new board of three men was formed, led by Taylor, a former Salesforce and Facebook executive who also chaired Twitter's board before Elon Musk took over the platform. The others are former U.S. Treasury Secretary Larry Summers and Quora CEO Adam D'Angelo, the only member of the previous board to stay on.

(Both Quora and Taylor's new startup, Sierra, operate their own AI chatbots that rely in part on OpenAI technology.)

After it retained the law firm in December, OpenAI said WilmerHale conducted dozens of interviews with the company's prior board, current executives, advisers and other witnesses. The company also said the law firm reviewed thousands of documents and other corporate actions. WilmerHale didn't immediately respond to a request for comment.

Image: Nathan Laine

The board said it will also be making "improvements" to the company's governance structure. It said it will adopt new corporate governance guidelines, strengthen the company's policies around conflicts of interest, create a whistleblower hotline that will allow employees and contractors to submit anonymous reports and establish additional board committees.

The company still has other troubles to contend with, including a lawsuit filed by Musk, who helped bankroll the early years of OpenAI and was a co-chair of its board after its 2015 founding. Musk alleges that the company is betraying its founding mission in pursuit of profits.

Legal experts have expressed doubt about whether Musk's arguments, centered around an alleged breach of contract, will hold up in court. But it has already forced open the company's internal conflicts about its unusual governance structure, how "open" it should be about its research and how to pursue what's known as artificial general intelligence, or AI systems that can perform just as well as — or even better than — humans in a wide variety of tasks.

Taylor said that OpenAI's "mission-driven nonprofit" structure won't be changing as it continues to pursue its vision for artificial general intelligence that benefits "all of humanity."

"Our duties are to the mission, first and foremost, but the company — this amazing company that we're in right now — was created to serve that mission," Taylor said.

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US SPEARHEADS FIRST UN RESOLUTION ON ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE, AIMED AT ENSURING WORLD HAS ACCESS

The United States is spearheading the first United Nations resolution on artificial intelligence, aimed at ensuring the new technology is "safe, secure and trustworthy" and that all countries, especially those in the developing world, have equal access.

The draft General Assembly resolution aims to close the digital divide between countries and make sure they are all at the table in discussions on AI — and that they have the technology and capabilities to take advantage of its benefits, including detecting diseases, predicting floods and training the next generation of workers.

The draft recognizes the rapid acceleration of AI development and use and stresses "the urgency of achieving global consensus on safe, secure and trustworthy artificial intelligence systems." It also recognizes that "the governance of artificial intelligence systems is an evolving area" that needs further discussions on possible governance approaches.

U.S. National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan said the United States turned to the General Assembly "to have a truly global conversation on how to manage the implications of the fast-advancing technology of AI."

The resolution "would represent global support for a baseline set of principles for the development and use of AI and would lay out a path to leverage AI systems for good while managing the risks," he said in a statement to The Associated Press.

If approved, Sullivan said, "this resolution will be an historic step forward in fostering safe, secure and trustworthy AI worldwide."

The United States began negotiating with the 193 U.N. member nations about three months ago, spent hundreds of hours in direct talks with individual countries, 42 hours in negotiations and accepted input from 120 nations, a senior U.S. official said. The resolution achieved consensus support from all member states and will be formally considered later this month, the official said, speaking on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to speak publicly.

Unlike Security Council resolutions, General Assembly resolutions are not legally binding but they are an important barometer of world opinion.

A key goal, according to the draft resolution, is to use AI to help spur progress toward achieving the U.N.'s badly lagging development goals for 2030, including ending global hunger and poverty, improving health worldwide, ensuring quality secondary education for all children and achieving gender equality.

The draft resolution encourages all countries, regional and international organizations, technical communities, civil society, the media, academia, research institutions and individuals "to develop and support regulatory and governance approaches and frameworks" for safe AI systems.

Lawmakers in the European Union are set to gave final approval to the world's first comprehensive AI rules. Countries around the world, including the U.S. and China, or global groupings like the Group of 20 industrialized nations also are moving to draw up AI regulations.

The U.S. draft calls on the 193 U.N. member states and others to assist developing countries to access the benefits of digital transformation and safe AI systems. It "emphasizes that human rights and fundamental freedoms must be respected, protected and promoted throughout the life cycle of artificial intelligence systems."

U.S. Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield recalled President Joe Biden's address to the General Assembly last year where he said emerging technologies, including AI, hold enormous potential.

She said the resolution "aims to build international consensus on a shared approach to the design, development, deployment and use of AI systems," particularly to support the 2030 U.N. goals.

ELON MUSK VISITS A TESLA PLANT NEAR BERLIN AS PRODUCTION RESUMES AFTER A SUSPECTED ARSON ATTACK

Tesla CEO Elon Musk visited the electric car maker's first European plant on Wednesday as production resumed at the factory just outside Berlin, about a week after a suspected arson attack cut its power supply.

Musk was expected at a "team huddle" with employees at the plant in the Gruenheide municipality, employee council chief Michaela Schmitz told regional broadcaster RBB's Inforadio channel. Reporters at the scene could see him arriving from a distance and he turned their way, shouting "Deutschland rocks" or "Germany rocks."

Production at Tesla's plant in Gruenheide came to a standstill on Tuesday last week. Tens of thousands of residents, nearby hospitals, nursing homes and a big logistics center for a German grocery chain were also initially affected.

The electricity supply to the plant was restored on Monday evening. Schmitz said that, after machines were checked and started up, "the early shift can begin (work) again this morning."

"People are glad to be able to come back to work," she added.

Authorities in the state of Brandenburg, where the plant is located, have said they suspect that someone deliberately set fire to a high-voltage transmission line on an electricity pylon.

A far-left organization calling itself the Volcano Group said it was behind the fire, accusing Tesla of "extreme exploitation conditions" and calling for the "complete destruction of the gigafactory." The German federal prosecutor's office took over the investigation, citing an initial suspicion that a terrorist organization may have been involved in the attack.

Tesla opened the factory in March 2022, launching a challenge to German automakers on their home turf.

The power outage came as environmental activists have been protesting in a forest near the plant against plans to expand the facility.

The company now wants to add a freight depot, warehouses and a kindergarten. Those plans would entail felling more than 100 hectares (247 acres) of forest. That has drawn opposition from environmentalists and some other local groups, who also worry about possible effects on the area's water supply.

Asked by reporters from a distance whether he was still planning to expand the Tesla factory in Berlin, Musk answered, "absolutely."

About 12,500 people work at the plant.

SCHMITZ
SCHMITZ

COMPARING THREE-ROW EVS: THE KIA EV9 VS RIVIAN R1S

Shoppers thinking about buying a three-row SUV have plenty of options. Unless they want an electric SUV, that is. Fortunately, there are two models that hold a lot of promise: the Kia EV9 and the Rivian R1S. The EV9 is Kia's latest and largest electric SUV. Think of it as a Kia Telluride that's electric. As for the R1S, it hails from Rivian, an electric vehicle startup, and boasts massive power and impressive off-road performance. Both can haul lots of passengers and swallow loads of cargo. But which is the better buy? Car experts compare them to find out.

EV9

RANGE AND CHARGING

The EV9's base model provides a modest EPA-estimated range of 230 miles on a full charge. But for a small price increase, shoppers can upgrade to get an EPA-estimated 304 miles. Those models are rear-wheel-drive. You can also get all-wheel drive and more power, though range drops to 270-280 miles. Experts tested an EV9 with an estimated 270 miles and found it could go 306 miles in its standardized real-world range test.

Rivian offers more available battery and electric motor combinations for the R1S. Depending on what you pick, the R1S will have an EPA-estimated driving range of 270-400 miles. All models come standard with all-wheel drive. The R1S model tested outperformed its EPA estimate of 318 miles by driving 330 miles.

For a family-oriented EV that might be used on road trips, charging times can be just as important as range. When hooked up to a high-powered fast-charging station, the EV9 topped the R1S in testing by adding 100 miles of range in an average of 11 minutes. To gain 100 miles, the R1S needed an average of 19 minutes.

Essentially, the Rivian R1S offers a longer maximum driving range but the EV9 reduces the time spent charging on long road trips. Consider this a toss-up.

Winner: tie

COMFORT AND INTERIOR FEATURES

The EV9 isn't a luxury SUV but it comes standard with premium features like synthetic leather upholstery and heated and ventilated front

RIVIAN

seats. There's also plenty of tech including big display screens, wireless Apple CarPlay and Android Auto smartphone integration, and many standard advanced driver aids. The Kia is also as comfortable as many luxury SUVs thanks to its cushy seats and smooth ride. As another bonus, the EV9 can fit adults in all three rows.

The R1S is a luxury SUV that sports premium features such as an adjustable air suspension, wood trim and a panoramic glass roof.
Tech features include a large 16-inch center touchscreen and a Meridian audio system, but smartphone integration is missing. The Rivian's ride quality and seat comfort are a little disappointing and not as good as the EV9's. But like the EV9, all three rows are large enough for adults.

Winner: Kia EV9

POWER, UTILITY AND TOWING

The EV9 seats six or seven passengers and provides 20.2 cubic feet of cargo space behind the third row and 43.5 cubic feet when it's folded down. This is a little less than what you get from a comparable gas-powered three-row midsize SUV but still plenty useful for weekend shopping and recreational use. It also has a small front trunk. When properly equipped, certain models can tow up to 5,000 pounds. The EV9 produces between 201 and 379 horsepower depending on the model you get.

The R1S seats seven passengers and can carry 17.6 cubic feet of cargo behind the third row and 46.7 cubic feet with the third row folded down. Its large front trunk is considerably larger than the EV9's, giving you another spot to store

gear. The R1S tops the EV9 with its impressive max towing capacity of 7,700 pounds. It's also a powerhouse, producing 533 to 835 horsepower depending on the motor configuration, and it's capable of going off-road.

Winner: Rivian R1S

PRICING AND VALUE

The EV9 starts at just $56,395 with the destination fee for the short-range model, but the long-range model is only a few thousand more. The range-topping model starts at $75,395. That's a lot of value considering its range, charging speed, features and solid build quality.

The R1S starts at $76,700 with destination for the base model, which is about as much as the luxurious top-spec EV9 model. The most expensive configuration with the long-range Max battery pack starts at $100,800. When you consider the R1S' impressive on- and off-road performance, you get a lot of SUV for the money. However, most people shopping for a three-row SUV don't need sports car acceleration or Jeep-like off-road performance.

Winner: Kia EV9

The Rivian R1S standsout with its distinctive styling and impressive performance. But the EV9's combination of value, comfort and all-around performance makes it the winner of this comparison and one of highest-rated electric three-row SUVs.

US LAWMAKERS SAY TIKTOK WON'T BE BANNED IF IT FINDS A NEW OWNER. BUT THAT'S EASIER SAID THAN DONE

Image: Damian Dovarganes

U.S. lawmakers are threatening to ban TikTok but also say they are giving its Chinese parent company a chance to keep it running.

The premise of a bipartisan bill headed for a vote in the U.S. House of Representatives is that TikTok fans in the U.S. can keep scrolling through their favorite social media app so long as Beijing-based ByteDance gives up on owning it.

"It doesn't have to be this painful for ByteDance," U.S. Rep. Raja Krishnamoorthi, an Illinois Democrat and bill co-sponsor, recently posted on X. "They could make it a lot easier on themselves by simply divesting @tiktok_us. It's their choice."

But it's not going to be as simple as lawmakers are making it sound, according to experts.

WHO WOULD BUY TIKTOK?

While some people have voiced an interest in buying TikTok's U.S. business — among them "Shark Tank" star Kevin O'Leary — there are a number of challenges including a 6-month deadline to get it done.

"Somebody would have to actually be ready to shell out the large amount of money that this product and system is worth," said Stanford University researcher Graham Webster, who studies Chinese technology policy and U.S.-China relations. "But even if somebody has deep enough pockets and is ready to go into negotiating to purchase, this sort of matchmaking on acquisitions is not quick."

TikTok

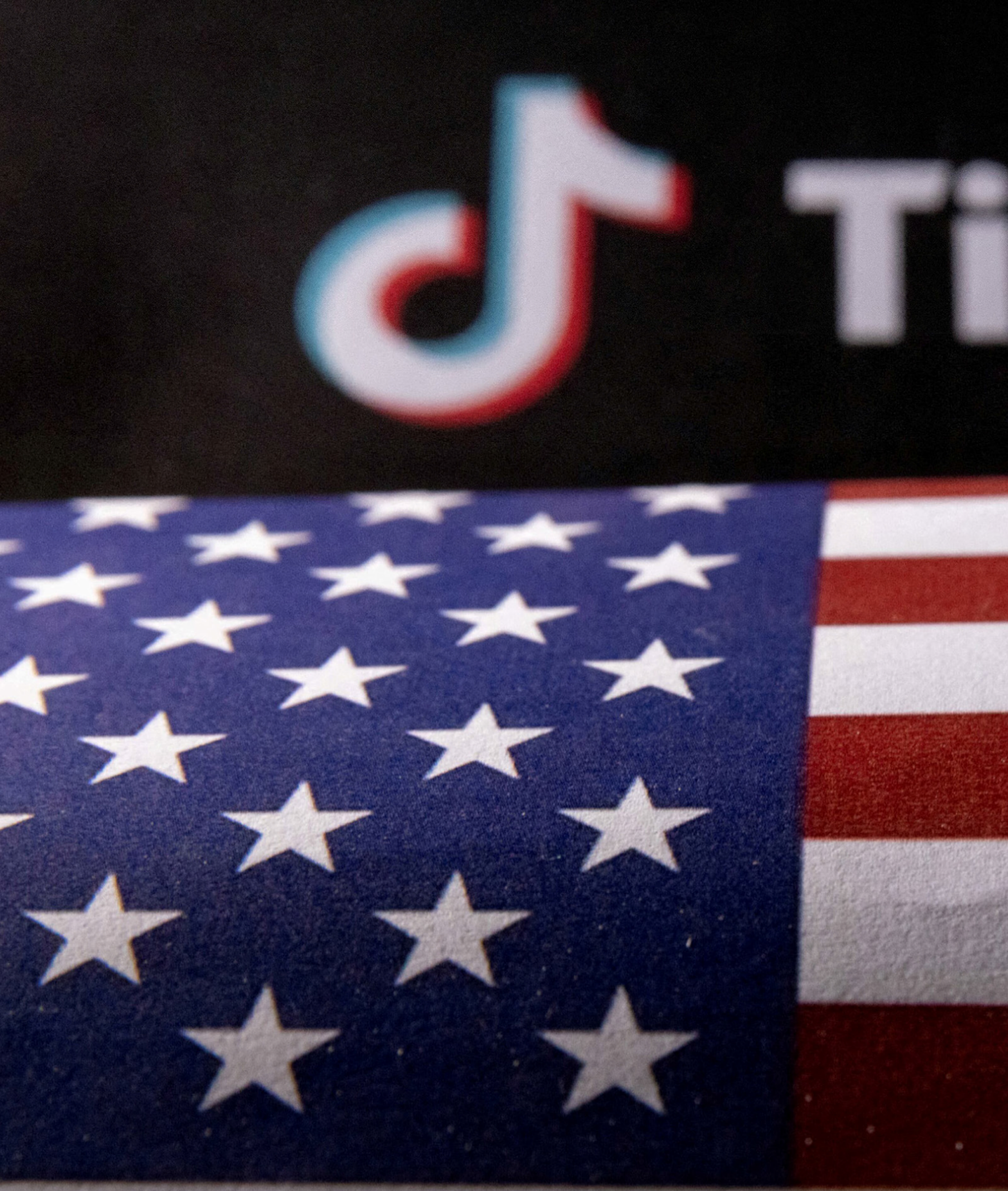


Image: Dado Ruvic

kTok

TikTok

Big tech companies could afford it but would likely face intense scrutiny from antitrust regulators in both the U.S. and China. Then again, if the bill actually becomes law and survives First Amendment court challenges, it could make TikTok cheaper to buy.

"One of the main effects of the legislation would be to decrease the sale price," said Matt Perault, director of the University of North Carolina's Center on Technology Policy, which gets funding from TikTok and other tech companies. "As you approach that 180-day clock, the pressure on the company to sell or risk being banned entirely would be high, which would mean probably the acquirers could get it at a lower price."

HOW WOULD IT WORK?

The bill calls for prohibiting TikTok in the U.S. but makes an exception if there's a "qualified divestiture."

That could only happen if the U.S. president determines "through an interagency process" that TikTok is "no longer being controlled by a foreign adversary," according to the bill. Not only that, but the new U.S.-based TikTok would have to completely cut ties with ByteDance. That includes no more "cooperation with respect to the operation of a content recommendation algorithm or an agreement with respect to data sharing."

Image: Bret Lewin

It reflects longstanding concerns that Chinese authorities could force ByteDance to hand over data on the 170 million Americans who use TikTok. The worry stems from a set of Chinese national security laws that compel organizations to assist with intelligence gathering.

It's an unusual bill in the way that it targets a single company. Typically, a government group led by the Treasury secretary called the Committee on Foreign Investment in the United States, or CFIUS, will review whether such a sale would pose any national security threats.

HASN'T THIS HAPPENED BEFORE?

Yes. The Trump administration brokered a deal in 2020 that would have had U.S. corporations Oracle and Walmart take a large stake in TikTok on national security grounds.

The deal would have also made Oracle responsible for hosting all TikTok's U.S. user data and securing computer systems to ensure national security requirements are satisfied. Microsoft also made a failed bid for TikTok that its CEO Satya Nadella later described as the "strangest thing I've ever worked on."

Instead of congressional action, the 2020 arrangement was in response to then-President Donald Trump's series of executive actions targeting TikTok.

But the sale never went through for a number of reasons. Trump's executive orders got held up in court as the 2020 presidential election loomed. China also had imposed stricter export controls on its technology providers.

Incoming President Joe Biden in 2021 reversed course and dropped the legal proceedings. Now Biden says he's in favor a bill that would ban TikTok if ByteDance won't divest, and Trump is not.

STATE AGS SEND LETTER TO META ASKING IT TO TAKE ‘IMMEDIATE ACTION’ ON USER ACCOUNT TAKEOVERS

A group of 40 state attorneys general have sent a letter to Instagram and Facebook parent company Meta expressing "deep concern" over what they say is dramatic uptick of consumer complaints about account takeovers and lockouts.

The attorneys general called on Meta to do a better job preventing account takeovers — when malicious actors take a users' accounts, lock them out by changing their passwords, and post their own material, read private messages, scam contacts and engage in other harmful or illegal behavior.

The letter asks Meta to take "immediate action to increase mitigation tactics and respond to users whose accounts have been taken over." It also asks the Menlo Park, California-based company to provide information on the number of account takeovers over the past five years, the suspected causes of the increase in account takeovers and safeguards it has in place.

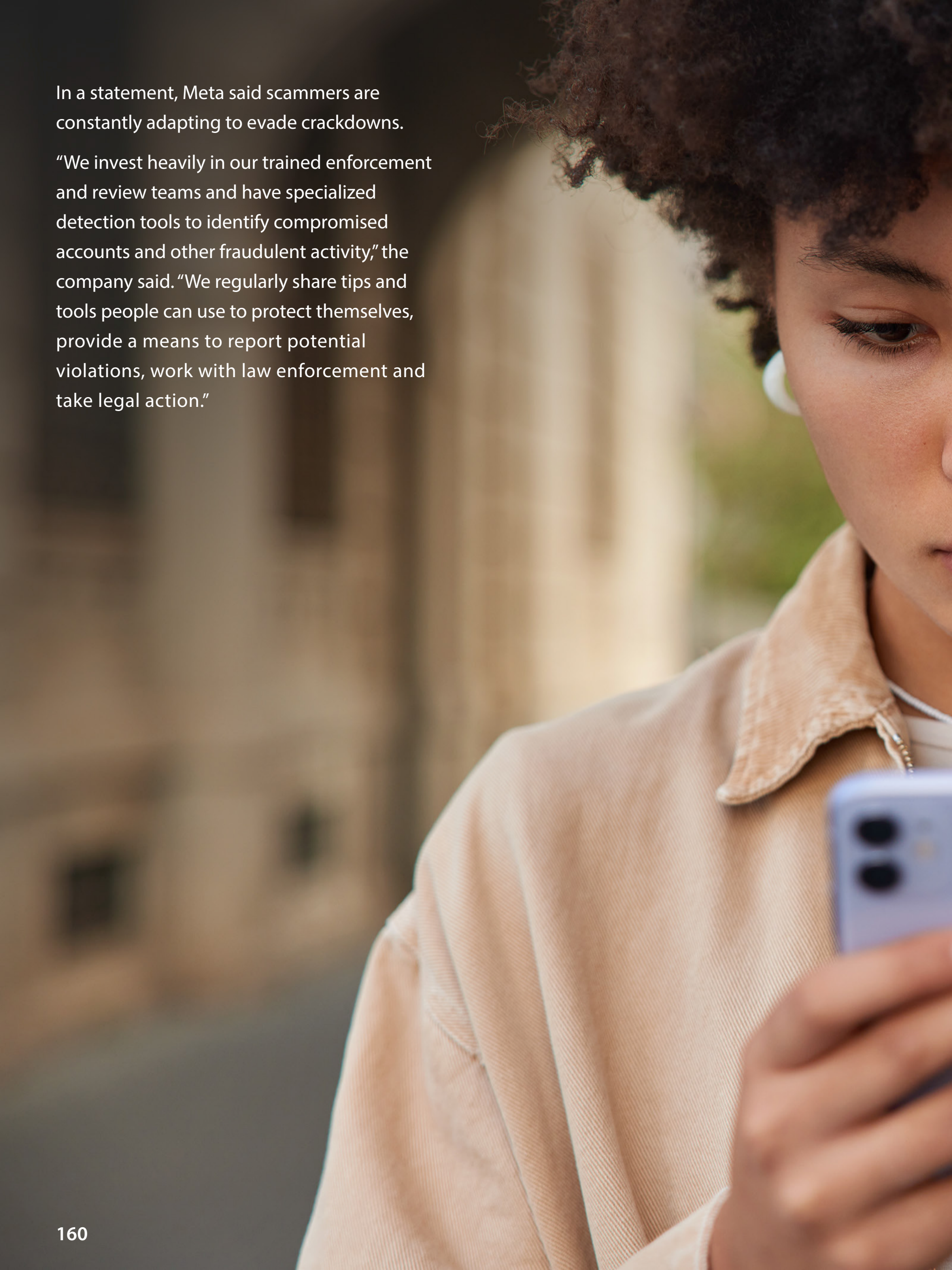
"Consumers are reporting their utter panic when they first realize they have been effectively locked out of their accounts," says the letter dated March 5. "Users spend years building their personal and professional lives on your platforms, posting intimate thoughts, and sharing personal details, locations, and photos of family and friends. To have it taken away from them through no fault of their own can be traumatizing."

Even worse, the letter says, the takeovers pose a significant financial risk to users, who may be running businesses or have credit card information linked to their social media accounts.

1 Hacker Way

In a statement, Meta said scammers are constantly adapting to evade crackdowns.

"We invest heavily in our trained enforcement and review teams and have specialized detection tools to identify compromised accounts and other fraudulent activity," the company said. "We regularly share tips and tools people can use to protect themselves, provide a means to report potential violations, work with law enforcement and take legal action."



REDDIT IS PREPARING TO SELL SHARES TO THE PUBLIC. HERE'S WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

Reddit, that vast, lively and sometimes chaotic repository of internet discussion, projected a price for its initial public offering stock that values the 18-year-old social media platform at up to $6.4 billion.

The offering also makes Reddit one of the first online companies to offer shares to its contributors — the "Redditors" who comment on its boards and the moderators who manage them. That's a break with traditional IPO practice, in which initial shares are typically sold to institutional investors and fund managers

reddit

who then begin trading the stock on the open market. Adding the company's users to the mix could make for a much livelier offering, and not necessarily in a good way.

It could be an interesting ride.

WHAT ARE THE DETAILS OF THE IPO?

Reddit plans to list 22 million shares at a price between $31 and $34, according to the latest version of the IPO prospectus it filed Monday with the Securities and Exchange Commission. The company stands to take in between $473.6 million and $519.4 million from the sale of roughly 15.3 million shares.

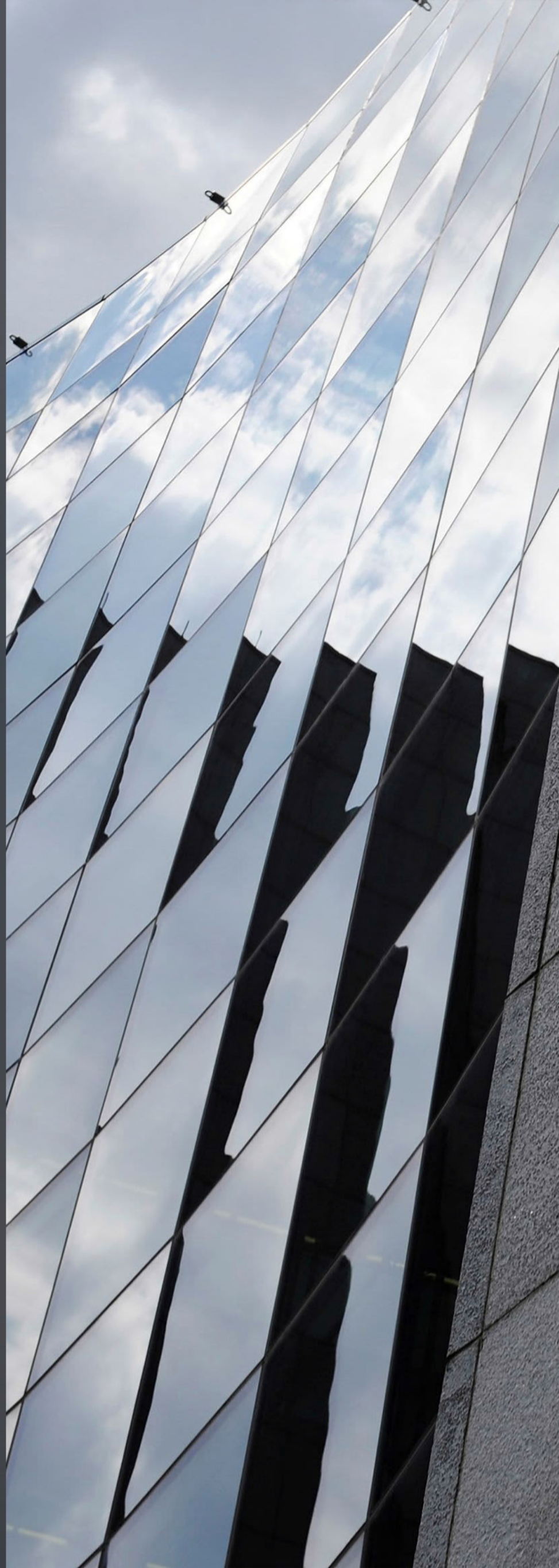
Reddit's existing investors will sell an additional 6.7 million shares in the offering, raising between $208.4 million and $228.6 million for their own portfolios. Reddit itself won't benefit from those sales.

Per standard IPO operating procedure, those shares will typically end up with a mix of mutual funds, hedge funds and other major investment groups who will then hawk them to their investor customers.

WHAT'S DIFFERENT ABOUT THE REDDIT IPO?

Reddit also plans to sell up to 1.76 million shares — roughly 8% of the total offering — to a mix of certain board members and so-called "friends and family members" of certain board members and employees. Plus, of course, the moderators and Redditors who make Reddit what it is.

The wild card here is that these stock purchasers, who will pay the IPO price for their shares, won't be bound by "lock-up agreements" that require



SECURITIES AND EXCHANGE COMMISSION
U.S. ★ MCMXXXIV

reddit

company officers and employees to hold their shares for a fixed period of time — potentially as long as six months. That means Redditors and moderators will be able to sell their shares immediately if they wish.

WHAT ARE THE RISKS OF THIS SETUP?

For starters, think share-price volatility.

While it's not clear from the perspective just how many of those 1.76 million shares will end up in the hands of Reddit users, the number is likely large enough for those users to exert meaningful pressure on Reddit's share price. The main concern is that a surge of demand for shares that aren't locked up could create a sudden run-up in the share price, followed by an equally sharp decline once the initial excitement wears off and short-sellers — investors who effectively place bets that a stock will decline — begin to gather.

That's pretty much what happened with Robinhood Markets, which operates a simple-to-use and low cost trading platform aimed at novice investors that also offered IPO shares to its users. The company's stock opened at $38 on its first day of trading in July 2021, shot up to $85 five days later, then plunged back to roughly $40 after just six weeks. Robinhood closed the week at $16.86.

"Mishandling this process could result in (Reddit) alienating their most ardent supporters, potentially turning them into critics," warned Deiya Pernas, co-founder of Pernas Research.

But Don Montanaro, president of the trading platform Firstrade, argues that Reddit may not have had much choice but to go this route.

Robinhood
WALL

"They've been running a business where their clients, their users, are their product," he said. "It's a case of, 'What else could we do? This is who we are, how could we not offer this to these people?'"

CAN I GET IN ON THIS OFFERING?

If you don't already have a Reddit account, you're probably out of luck. The offering is only available to users who had established accounts as of January 1, 2024.

Beyond that, shares will be distributed to Redditors and moderators via a formula that accounts for their measurable contributions to the discussion boards. Redditors with high "karma" scores — a measure of their contributions to the community, such as posts that other Redditors find useful, amusing or insightful — will be grouped into six priority tiers for access to the stock offering.

Moderators who have taken significant numbers of "moderator actions" will likewise be sorted into those tiers. Such actions can include anything from designing a new discussion group — aka a "subreddit" in the jargon of the site — to removing spam or duplicate posts, to enforcing subreddit rules. Moderators will also be rated on membership trends in their subreddits.

None of this guarantees an individual a chance at buying shares if demand exceeds supply, although Reddit emphasizes in the prospectus that anyone who isn't awarded a shot at purchasing shares can join a waitlist.

‘KUNG FU PANDA 4’ IS A SWEET, FUN AND WELL EXECUTED PASSING OF THE TORCH

REVIEW

Kung Fu Panda 4 | Official Trailer

"Kung Fu Panda 4" finds our trusty, rotund hero Po at a career crossroads and he's nervous. "Change doesn't have to be a bad thing," he is told. "Kung Fu Panda 4" also finds the franchise at an inflection point, but there's no reason for us to be nervous. DreamWorks knows what it's doing.

The series' first new installment in eight years is a reliably funny, sweet and wonderfully realized passing of the torch, with a paw in the past and another into the future — an elegant goodbye and a hello. Many other filmmakers — ahem, Marvel and DC — might learn a thing.

When we meet him, Po — voiced as always by a lively Jack Black — is being asked to give up his dream role as Dragon Warrior and pick a successor. He's being kicked upstairs to be Spiritual Leader of the Valley of Peace. (This is basically the Peter Principle illustrated in animation.)

Except Po doesn't want to go into management. He loves smashing skulls and still has that lovable imposter syndrome he's had since the franchise began. He tries to short-circuit any succession plans, change being too frightening.

A new enemy threatening an existential crisis offers a reprieve — The Chameleon — a wicked, powerful sorceress voiced by Viola Davis — looks like the lizard from the GEICO commercials who spent too much time at Graceland.

Po teams up with a new character — a Corsac fox named Zhen voiced by Awkwafina — who is an orphan-turned-thief and teaches the too-trusting panda to trust no one. The movie then becomes a buddy road movie as these two hunt The Chameleon and a chance to bundle their home and auto insurance.

Kung Fu Panda 4 | Sand & Spice Trailer

Wait a minute, you might be asking: Where are The Furious Five — Tigress, Viper, Monkey, Crane and Mantis — who have been in each "Kung Fu Panda" iteration so far? They're not really in "Kung Fu Panda 4," but the film reaches back to the first installment to bring back the snow leopard, Tai Lung, voiced by the sonorous Ian McShane.

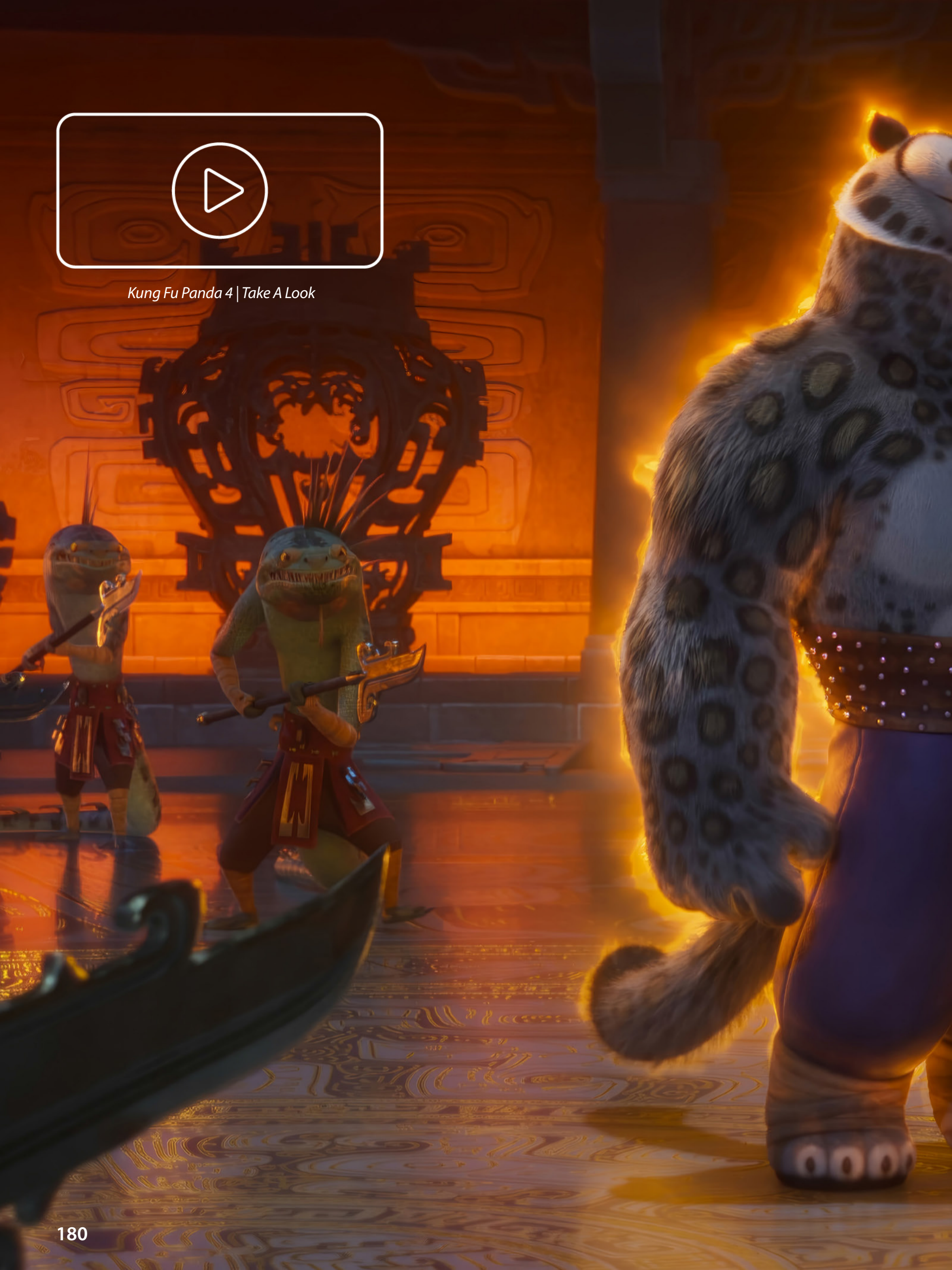
Bryan Cranston is also back to voice Po's goofy biological father and James Hong returns as his spirited adoptive goose dad, while Dustin Hoffman reprises his role as eye-rolling master Shifu.

It's a good balance of new and old characters but a masterstroke is coming: The Chameleon finds a way of accessing the spirit realm and bringing back every villain Po has ever faced. That results in a greatest hits-like fight scene that may be hard to top if there's a "Kung Fu Panda 5."

The third installment's writers, Jonathan Aibel and Glenn Berger, are also back this time, joined by Darren Lemke. The film is helmed by "The Lego Movie 2" director Mike Mitchell and co-directed by Stephanie Ma Stine, who worked on "Raya and the Last Dragon."

The last three movies have largely stuck to the rural Valley of Peace, so the filmmakers change it up this time and take Po and Zhen to an urban environment, Juniper City, packed with busy animals, rickshaws, and bulls as police officers (watch for a hilarious bull-in-a-jade-shop joke).

As always, it's the animators who are the real heroes here. From the thick fur on the pandas, to clay tiles smashing on roofs to rain splashing on stones, barroom brawls and petals wafting from cherry trees, this is a visual delight.



Kung Fu Panda 4 | Take A Look

Creating The Chameleon — and her scary Komodo dragon guards — gives the animators a chance to show a tiny lizard metamorphosize into an elephant in a few seconds and they relish it. They also sometimes dip into different animation styles, giving a viewer a visual break.

There are some missteps, like a pelican character controlled by a fish in its mouth and three cute bunnies who appear adorable and yet are deeply psychotic. ("Violence makes my tummy tingle," one says.) Plus, the teaming up again of Po's dads, while welcome, is also sort of pointless here.

But, as Po would say, "Skadoosh!" The filmmaker have managed a very tricky assignment: Pave the way for a new franchise direction, find new ways to entertain us, remind us of lessons like "It's never too late to do the right thing" and end the whole thing with the Black-led cover by Tenacious D of "... Baby One More Time" by Britney Spears. Embrace the change.

"Kung Fu Panda 4," a DreamWorks Animation release, is rated PG for "for mild violence, martial arts action, scary images and some mild rude humor." Running time: 94 minutes. Three stars out of four.

MPAA Definition of PG: Parental guidance suggested.
Online: https://www.dreamworks.com/movies/kung-fu-panda-4

EUROPE'S WORLD-FIRST AI RULES GET FINAL APPROVAL FROM LAWMAKERS. HERE'S WHAT HAPPENS NEXT

European Union lawmakers gave final approval to the 27-nation bloc's artificial intelligence law Wednesday, putting the world-leading rules on track to take effect later this year.

Lawmakers in the European Parliament voted overwhelmingly in favor of the Artificial Intelligence Act, five years after regulations were first proposed. The AI Act is expected to act as a global signpost for other governments grappling with how to regulate the fast-developing technology.

Image: Jean-Francois Badia

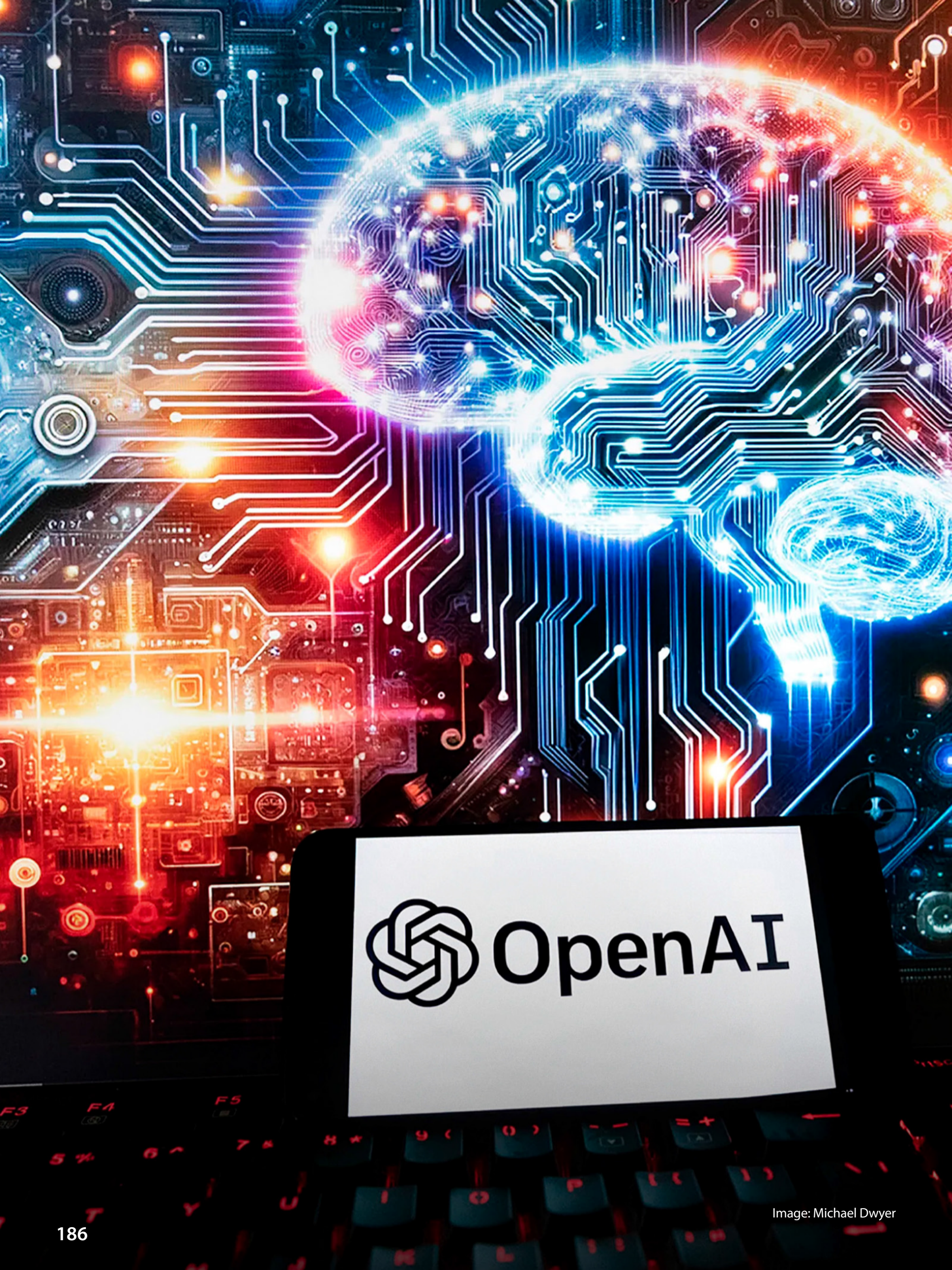
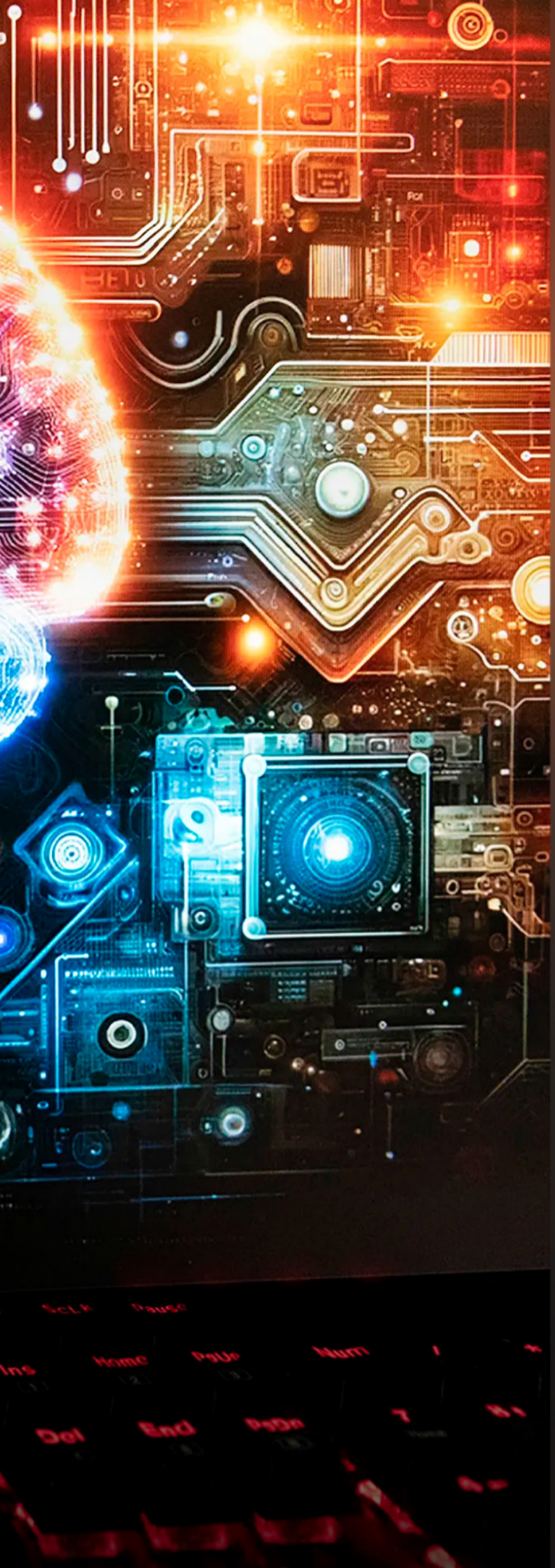


Image: Michael Dwyer



"The AI Act has nudged the future of AI in a human-centric direction, in a direction where humans are in control of the technology and where it — the technology — helps us leverage new discoveries, economic growth, societal progress and unlock human potential," Dragos Tudorache, a Romanian lawmaker who was a co-leader of the Parliament negotiations on the draft law, said before the vote.

Big tech companies generally have supported the need to regulate AI while lobbying to ensure any rules work in their favor. OpenAI CEO Sam Altman caused a minor stir last year when he suggested the ChatGPT maker could pull out of Europe if it can't comply with the AI Act — before backtracking to say there were no plans to leave.

Here's a look at the world's first comprehensive set of AI rules:

HOW DOES THE AI ACT WORK?

Like many EU regulations, the AI Act was initially intended to act as consumer safety legislation, taking a "risk-based approach" to products or services that use artificial intelligence.

The riskier an AI application, the more scrutiny it faces. The vast majority of AI systems are expected to be low risk, such as content recommendation systems or spam filters. Companies can choose to follow voluntary requirements and codes of conduct.

High-risk uses of AI, such as in medical devices or critical infrastructure like water or electrical networks, face tougher requirements like using high-quality data and providing clear information to users.

Image: Jean-Francois Badia

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Image: Markus Schreiber

Some AI uses are banned because they're deemed to pose an unacceptable risk, like social scoring systems that govern how people behave, some types of predictive policing and emotion recognition systems in school and workplaces.

Other banned uses include police scanning faces in public using AI-powered remote "biometric identification" systems, except for serious crimes like kidnapping or terrorism.

WHAT ABOUT GENERATIVE AI?

The law's early drafts focused on AI systems carrying out narrowly limited tasks, like scanning resumes and job applications. The astonishing rise of general purpose AI models, exemplified by OpenAI's ChatGPT, sent EU policymakers scrambling to keep up.

They added provisions for so-called generative AI models, the technology underpinning AI chatbot systems that can produce unique and seemingly lifelike responses, images and more.

Developers of general purpose AI models — from European startups to OpenAI and Google — will have to provide a detailed summary of the text, pictures, video and other data on the internet that is used to train the systems as well as follow EU copyright law.

AI-generated deepfake pictures, video or audio of existing people, places or events must be labeled as artificially manipulated.

There's extra scrutiny for the biggest and most powerful AI models that pose "systemic risks," which include OpenAI's GPT4 — its most advanced system — and Google's Gemini.

The EU says it's worried that these powerful AI systems could "cause serious accidents or be misused for far-reaching cyberattacks." They also fear generative AI could spread "harmful biases" across many applications, affecting many people.

Companies that provide these systems will have to assess and mitigate the risks; report any serious incidents, such as malfunctions that cause someone's death or serious harm to health or property; put cybersecurity measures in place; and disclose how much energy their models use.

DO EUROPE'S RULES INFLUENCE THE REST OF THE WORLD?

Brussels first suggested AI regulations in 2019, taking a familiar global role in ratcheting up scrutiny of emerging industries, while other governments scramble to keep up.

In the U.S., President Joe Biden signed a sweeping executive order on AI in October that's expected to be backed up by legislation and global agreements. In the meantime, lawmakers in at least seven U.S. states are working on their own AI legislation.

Chinese President Xi Jinping has proposed his Global AI Governance Initiative for fair and safe use of AI, and authorities have issued " interim measures " for managing generative AI, which applies to text, pictures, audio, video and other content generated for people inside China.

Other countries, from Brazil to Japan, as well as global groupings like the United Nations and Group of Seven industrialized nations, are moving to draw up AI guardrails.

Image: Johana Geron

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

The AI Act is expected to officially become law by May or June, after a few final formalities, including a blessing from EU member countries. Provisions will start taking effect in stages, with countries required to ban prohibited AI systems six months after the rules enter the lawbooks.

Rules for general purpose AI systems like chatbots will start applying a year after the law takes effect. By mid-2026, the complete set of regulations, including requirements for high-risk systems, will be in force.

When it comes to enforcement, each EU country will set up their own AI watchdog, where citizens can file a complaint if they think they've been the victim of a violation of the rules. Meanwhile, Brussels will create an AI Office tasked with enforcing and supervising the law for general purpose AI systems.

Violations of the AI Act could draw fines of up to 35 million euros ($38 million), or 7% of a company's global revenue.

This isn't Brussels' last word on AI rules, said Italian lawmaker Brando Benifei, co-leader of Parliament's work on the law. More AI-related legislation could be ahead after summer elections, including in areas like AI in the workplace that the new law partly covers, he said.

Image: Dado Ruvic

telligence (AI)

WHY YOU SHOULD STOP TEXTING YOUR KIDS AT SCHOOL

Virginia high school teacher Joe Clement keeps track of the text messages parents have sent students sitting in his economics and government classes:

— "What did you get on your test?"

— "Did you get the field trip form signed?"

— "Do you want chicken or hamburgers for dinner tonight?"

Clement has a plea for parents: Stop texting your kids at school.

1 2 3 4 5 6
7 8 9 10 11 12
13 14 15 16 17 18
19 20 21 22 23 24
25 26 27 28 29 30
31 32 33 34 35 36
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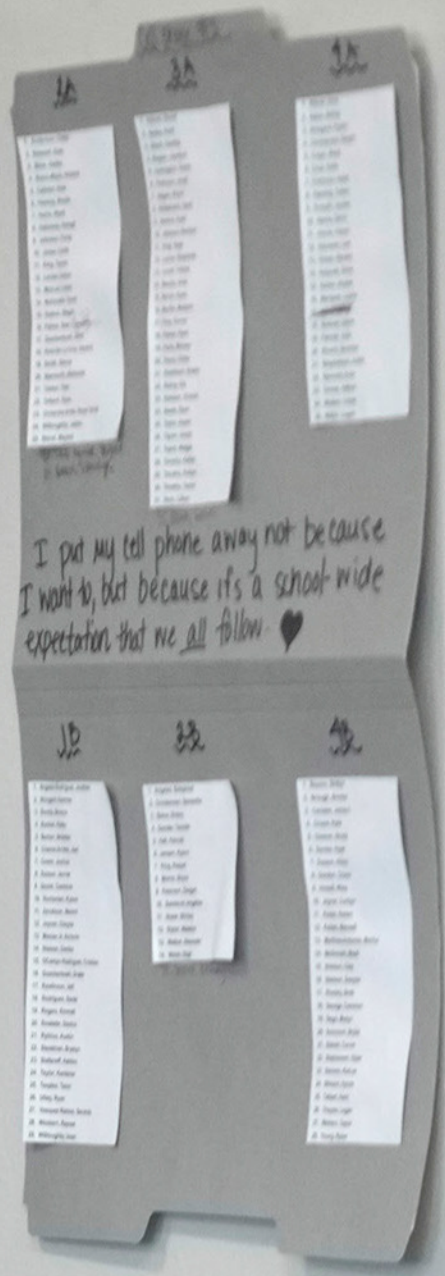
I put my cell phone away not because I want to, but because it's a school-wide expectation that we all follow. ♥

BECAUS
NICE
MATTER

Parents are distressingly aware of the distractions and the mental health issues associated with smartphones and social media. But teachers say parents might not realize how much those struggles play out at school.

One culprit? Mom and Dad themselves, whose stream-of-consciousness questions add to a climate of constant interruption and distraction from learning. Even when schools regulate or ban cellphones, it's hard for teachers to enforce it. And the constant buzzes on watches and phones are occupying critical brain space regardless of whether kids are sneaking a peek.

A few changes in parents' behavior can help make phones less distracting at school. Here's what teachers and experts recommend.

TRY IT: STOP TEXTING YOUR KID AT SCHOOL

Many parents stay in touch with their child by texting, but school is a place for focusing on learning and developing independence. Teachers say you can still reach your child if you have a change in plans or a family emergency: Just contact the front office.

If the message is not urgent, it can probably wait.

Think of it this way: "If you came to school and said, 'Can you pull my child out of calculus so I can tell them something not important?' we would say no," central Virginia school counselor Erin Rettig said.

Teachers emphasized: They are not saying parents are to blame for school cellphone battles, just that parents can do more to help. Tell your kids, for example, not to

text home unless it is urgent. And if they do, ignore it.

"When your children are texting you stuff that can wait — like, 'Can I go to Brett's house five days from now?' — don't respond," said Sabine Polak, one of three mothers who co-founded the Phone-Free Schools Movement. "You have to stop engaging. That's just feeding the problem."

CUT THE CORD FROM 8 TO 3

Many parents got used to being in constant contact during the COVID-19 pandemic, when kids were home doing online school. They have kept that communication going as life has otherwise returned to normal.

"We call it the digital umbilical cord. Parents can't let go. And they need to," Clement said.

Parents might not expect their kids to respond immediately to texts (though many do). But when students pull out their phones to reply, it opens the door to other social media distractions.

ANXIETY VIA TEXT MESSAGE

At parent workshops, Rettig, the school counselor in Virginia, tells parents they are contributing to children's anxiety by sending messages, tracking their whereabouts and checking grades daily, which doesn't give kids space to be independent at school.

Some teachers say they get emails from parents right after returning graded exams, before the class is over, because kids feel the need (or are told) to report grades immediately to parents.

Dr. Libby Milkovich, a developmental and behavioral pediatrician at Children's Mercy Kansas

City, says she asks parents to consider what kids miss out on by having parents at arms' reach during school hours.

"By texting back and forth with a parent, a child is unable to practice either self-calming or problem-solving skills," Milkovich said. "It's easy to text, but if I don't have a phone, I have to go ask the teacher or I have to figure it out on my own."

Some kids who oppose school cellphone bans say it's helpful to reach out to parents when they're feeling anxious or worried at school. For children with serious anxiety who are accustomed to texting parents for reassurance, Milkovich suggests phasing in limits so the child can gradually practice having more independence. She urges parents to ask themselves: Why does my child need constant access to a phone?

"Often parents say, 'I want to be able to reach my child at any time,' which has nothing to do with the child's outcome. It's because of the parents' anxiety," she said.

TAKE AWAY THAT OLD PHONE

Beth Black, a high school English teacher in the San Francisco Bay Area, tells parents to consider confiscating their child's old phones.

Her school requires students to put phones in a special cellphone holder when they enter classrooms. But she has seen students stash their old, inactive phone there, and hold onto the phone that works.

Like many teachers, she says phones aren't the only problem. There's also the earbud issue.

"Forty percent of my students have at least one earbud in when they walk into class," Black said. "The

kids will set their phone in the holder to music and they'll listen to music in class in one earbud."

TURN OFF NOTIFICATIONS

Parents' reining in their texts will only go so far. So work with your kids to turn off some or all of their attention-stealing notifications.

To prove just how distracting smartphones are, Clement ran an in-class experiment where he asked students to take their phones off silent and switch on notifications for two minutes.

"It sounded like an old-time video arcade — bizzing, buzzing, dinging and ringing for two solid minutes," he said.

Many studies have found students check their phones frequently during class. A study last year from Common Sense Media found teens get bombarded with as many as 237 notifications a day. About 25% of them pop up during the school day, mostly from friends on social media.

"Every time our focus is interrupted, it takes a lot of brain power and energy to get back on task," said Emily Cherkin, a Seattle-based teacher-turned-consultant who specializes in screen-time management.

Teachers say the best school cellphone policy is one that physically removes the phone from the child. Otherwise, it's hard to compete.

"When the phone vibrates in their pocket, now their focus is on their pocket. And they're wondering, 'How do I get it out to the table? How do I check it?'" said Randy Freiman, a high school chemistry teacher in upstate New York. "You ask them a question and they haven't heard a word you've said. Their brain is elsewhere."

MOST TEENS REPORT FEELING HAPPY OR PEACEFUL WHEN THEY GO WITHOUT SMARTPHONES, PEW SURVEY FINDS

Nearly three-quarters of U.S. teens say they feel happy or peaceful when they don't have their phones with them, according to a new report from the Pew Research Center.

In a survey published this week, Pew also found that despite the positive associations with going phone-free, most teens have not limited their phone or social media use.

The survey comes as policymakers and children's advocates are growing increasingly concerned with teens' relationships with their phones and social media. Last fall, dozens of states, including California and New York, sued Instagram and Facebook owner Meta Platforms Inc. for harming young people and contributing to the youth mental health crisis by knowingly and deliberately designing features that addict children. In January, the CEOs of Meta, TikTok, X and other social media companies went before the Senate Judiciary Committee to testify about their platforms' harms to young people.

Despite the increasing concerns, most teens say smartphones make it easier be creative and pursue hobbies, while 45% said it helps them do well in school. Most teens said the benefits of having a smartphone outweigh the harms for people their age. Nearly all U.S. teens (95%) have access to a smartphone, according to Pew.

Majorities of teens say smartphones make it a little or a lot easier for people their age to pursue hobbies and interests (69%) and be creative (65%). Close to half (45%) say these devices have made it easier for youth to do well in school.

The poll was conducted from Sept. 26-Oct. 23, 2023, among a sample of 1,453 pairs of teens

Facebook

REGON

with one parent and has a margin of error of plus or minus 3.2 percentage points.

Here are some of the survey's other findings:

— About half of parents (47%) say they limit the amount of time their teen can be on their phone, while a similar share (48%) don't do this.

— Roughly four in ten parents and teens (38% each) say they at least sometimes argue with each other about how much time their teen spends on the phone. Ten percent in each group said this happens often, with Hispanic Americans the most likely to say they often argue about phone use.

— Nearly two-thirds (64%) of parents of 13- to 14-year-olds say they look through their teen's smartphone, compared with 41% among parents of 15- to 17-year-olds.

— Forty-two percent of teens say smartphones make learning good social skills harder, while 30% said it makes it easier.

— About half of the parents said they spend too much time on their phone. Higher-income parents were more likely to say this than those in lower income buckets, and white parents were more likely to report spending too much time on their phone than Hispanic or Black parents.

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